



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600057080Q







IN A RASH MOMENT.

VOL. I.



# IN A RASH MOMENT.

BY

JESSIE McLAREN.

"For the heart must break, ere it grows a soul."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,  
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1879.

[*All rights reserved.*]

251. e. 936.



LONDON :  
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,  
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

## CONTENTS TO VOL. I.



### BOOK I.

#### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
FEARS AND FANCIES . . . . .	1

#### CHAPTER II.

DUST TO DUST . . . . .	11
------------------------	----

#### CHAPTER III.

"SAE COMLIE TO BE SEEN" . . . . .	22
-----------------------------------	----

#### CHAPTER IV.

DOES HE OR DOES HE NOT? . . . . .	30
-----------------------------------	----

#### CHAPTER V.

GOD KNOWS . . . . .	45
---------------------	----



217

70 E.C.



# IN A RASH MOMENT.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### FEARS AND FANCIES.

“How long shall I wait, come heat, come rime,  
Till the strong prince comes, who must come in time?”

“MILLE pardons, mademoiselle,” he exclaims, treading upon the skirt of my dress, which tears sharply across near the waist.

We are descending to the eating-room of the Schiffe Hotel at Baden-en-Suisse; going downstairs at the heels of forty or fifty intending diners, elderly fogies most of them, grinning in pairs, like the animals proceeding to Noah's Ark.


Papa, being in his bath, I chaperone myself, not loth to be rid of the snubbings and snarlings which constitute my experience of paternal care.

This is only my eighteenth birthday, but so sick am I of existence, that sometimes of a rainy afternoon I feel tempted to do like the Frenchman, who blew out his brains, simply because he found the world too uninteresting to put up with.

The only thing I really *do* care about is getting a good marriage, and of that there does not seem the slightest chance.

To pray on bended knee for a rich husband would not perhaps be conventionally correct, but were my heart a church, I am morally certain petitions to Heaven for a speedy and wealthy matrimonial settlement would be found fixed up, where the Creed and Ten Commandments usually are.

The last half of my existence has been



spent at anti-rheumatic spas, wandering from one medicinal hummums to another, my education being supervised meantime by such teachers as chanced to turn up, when we stayed long enough at any place, to make it worth while forcing me into scholastic harness.

Eleven years ago, on our way home from India, my mother died at the Cape; and papa, in a frenzy of grief, altered all his plans, and, instead of proceeding to England, started direct for Germany, to try some famous waters that had been recommended for his gout.

Ever since we have sojourned at baths good, bad, or indifferent, often the last, so far as *I* am concerned; for, unluckily, the special form of my father's disease requires Kürs more patronized by native than British invalids.

This is hard lines for me, and horribly dull,

because papa, who is as proud as Lucifer, votes every tolerable-looking foreigner who scrapes acquaintance with me, either a "blackguardly swindler," or a "confounded low cad," and orders me to keep my distance accordingly.

Of course I should never think of marrying any except a certified gentleman, but one must amuse one's self a little, and I suspect the "governor's" few remaining hairs would stand on end if he guessed half the flirtations I have carried on under his aristocratic Roman nose.

We only arrived here last evening, but don't I know the place of old? utterly dreary! never a soul worth dressing at; nobody but selfish, cranky invalids, who think of their own aches, morning, noon, and night.

Such are my cogitations, as, locking my bed-room door at the clang of the dinner



bell, I follow the other guests to the salle-à-manger. Sunshine glints in, in patches, through the outside vines, and an appetizing odour exhales from the lower regions.

Well, well! if existence be rather a bore, thank goodness, my digestion is perfect, and at the "Schiffe" one always dines admirably.

My mouth waters in anticipation of a certain chestnut-pudding which is a standing dish here, and a dressed calf's head the *chef* piques himself upon.

"Mille pardons, mademoiselle!" exclaims a voice, breaking in on my meditations, and my garment rends as aforesaid.

"N'importe, monsieur, it does not signify."


As I utter the words I know I am telling an untruth, for the wildest contingencies dart through my brain as the possible issue of this little accident.

The stranger is evidently "good form," and I have reason to know myself handsome enough to be fallen in love with at sight. Ergo !

Were he one of papa's abhorred "mounseers" I should at once assist him to make up to me, but Englishmen are more bashful, and do not easily take the cue in such cases ; so I lead the way downstairs demurely, although ready to "chasser forward" with delight.

His place at table is quite at the other end from where I sit, boxed up between a couple of sour old maids who jabber bad German across me.

He cannot of course address me now, but will probably hang about near the door, with his cigar, after dinner, when, if he is not plucky enough to say "bon soir" on the strength of having spoiled my gown, I shall



drop my fan or handkerchief, or do something so suggestive, that a blind beetle could hardly help seeing my intentions.

Meantime, as his soul seems in his soup plate, I may as well look after my own supplies, and presently my energies are absorbed in the thorough enjoyment of some Rhine-eel cooked with champagne, oil, and vine-leaves, which tastes ambrosial, although rather like a stewed constrictor to look at.

We are longer than usual at table, and toward the close of the feast, the brilliance of my day-dreams gradually pales. By-and-by the guests disperse, my unknown compatriot among them, but before rising he gives a general sort of scan up the table. Is he looking for me? I believe so, and would fain rush to the door, but those two selfish spinsters are still gourmandizing over their wild strawberries, and like Sterne's Starling,

"I can't get out," not without downright rudeness at least.

When, at length, I *am* free, the Englishman is nowhere to be seen; so, with spirits even flatter than ordinary, I mount to my chamber, set my elbows on the scarlet cushion at the open window, and, with a gaspy sigh, gaze at the setting sun.

A conviction has all at once seized me that something is about to happen. I have not the least idea what! but something disagreeable. The sky is a gorgeous blend of saffron, purple and crimson, with soft, grey cloudlets here and there, toning down the glory even while enhancing it. Across the river somebody is playing Victor Hugo's exquisite "Vous qui pleurez" on the cornopium. I happen to know the words, the notes of which come breathing like a wail across the vineyards—



“ Vous qui pleurez,  
Venez à ce Dieu, car Il console.”

Night creeps on, my presentiment of approaching evil grows stronger. Yet why? So far from being aware of any cause for it, I fully expect to make the Englishman's acquaintance to-morrow, and have what Americans call, “ good times,” in consequence. Darkness blots out the landscape.

Lighting a bougie, I take a well-thumbed pack of cards from my trunk, and kneeling at the table arrange them after a certain formula taught me years ago by one of my hap-hazard governesses.

Victor Hugo's lines keep sing-songing in my ears, although the cornopean player has ceased for the night:—

“ Vous qui pleurez,  
Venez à ce Dieu, car Il console.”

I ponder the spades and hearts and clubs

and diamonds. To my horror, as I have sorted them, they spell "DEATH."

Trembling, I begin rearranging them for another try. A puff of wind blows out the candle. I shut the window, hurry off my clothes, scramble into bed, and am presently asleep.

## CHAPTER II.

## DUST TO DUST.

“Nor guessed how when that night grew dim,  
His soul would be required of him.”

“Good gracious! what’s the matter?” I cry,  
started awake by somebody shaking my  
shoulder.

Lizette, the chamber-maid, and old Pierre,  
the Hotel porter, are standing at my bed-  
side, the latter holding a lantern.

“Oh! mam’zelle,” gasps the girl, in-  
coherent with excitement, “it is too dread-  
ful; and no one there to receive his parting  
sigh, poor monsieur, your papa—his bell rang  
—Pierre has answered it. Mam’zelle is aware

he always remains up till five, in case of arrivals—Hélas! it was too late—monsieur was already dead—stretched on the floor—he had expired in the act of getting into bed. O! mon Dieu, que c'est affreux!”


Sick and dizzy, I fall back on the pillows. I would feel heart-broken if I could. I detest myself for the lack of filial affection, which, for the first time, dimly strikes me, as something wanting in my composition.

By way of forcing the sorrow I do *not* experience, I call a mental muster of papa's best points, which does not take long.

“Won't you get up, mam'zelle?” whimpers Lizette.

“Yes, please leave the lantern, Pierre, I have no matches.”

Mine host and his wife arrive presently in extreme *déshabille*, to escort me to the death-chamber, whence a couple of bath





doctors are about to retire after doing their best ineffectually.

Hat in hand, and bowing profoundly, with their toes in the first position, they inform me that unfortunately all is over, and monsieur at rest.

The corpse lies on the bed covered with a sheet, which madame offers to turn down, that I may see the face. Shuddering, I decline.

“Pauvre petite,” she says, with tears in her honest, motherly eyes, “perhaps thou art right; to look upon the features of the dead is not always pleasant, better carry away in memory the last dear living smile.”

“Oui ! oui,” echoes her husband. “Thou hast reason, my wife: it is best so.”

She offers to sit with me, since I declare I cannot sleep; but I prefer being alone in my chamber, where already dawn is making objects visible.

“Dear mademoiselle,” she remonstrates, “it afflicts me to leave you quite solitary, but you shall have a cup of hot coffee directly. Console thyself; the good God has taken him.”

I drink the coffee, throw open the casement, and, with my chin in my palms, and my elbows on the window-sill, stare out, without noticing; feeling as if changed, since last night, from my old self into somebody else I am half frightened of.

By-and-by the cocks begin to crow, cow-bells tinkle, dogs bark, shadows flee away, the sun rises, another day has begun.

I make a satisfactory breakfast in my own room, and, at the last bite, up comes the landlord to consult about the burial, which cannot be long delayed, on account of the hot weather, and also, I imagine, because the presence of a corpse in the hotel might not be in its favour.

At the close of his speech he hands me papa's keys, and says my relations should be telegraphed for. Relations? I never heard of any, except a second cousin, and early chum of father's, with whom he exchanged letters twice a year or so. There may be others, but family affairs I never, by any chance, was spoken to about.

I search his pocket-book and desk for the cousin's address; find it, and telegraph as follows:—

“Roberta Gathorne, Schiffe Hotel, Baden-en-Suisse, to Colonel Frazer, 11, Manor Place, Edinburgh. My father died suddenly last night, I am alone, please come.”

There is a considerable sum of money in the desk which I take for present use, but leave everything else untouched till Colonel Frazer's arrival.

The coffin comes home in the afternoon. Peeping from my window to see if the Eng-

lish stranger is visible, I observe it borne along the Elm Walk. A quarter of an hour afterwards the house-mistress comes to propose I should inspect the mortuary arrangements.

Following her along the corridor, we pass an open door, where two female servants are conversing.

"Yes, indeed," says one, "I call it a beastly shame of any Englishman, to depart on his journey so early this morning and leave his "compatriot" in such distress, poor young lady! But what will you? They are no great shakes these foreigners after all."

Leaning on the landlady's stout arm, I enter the darkened apartment, where the coffin is mounted on tressels, sprinkled with flowers, and has lighted candles at the head and foot.

Excitement and want of sleep have shaken

my nerves ; my unknown compatriot's departure hurts me like a stab. I burst into a passion of tears, standing in front of my dead father.

“ Ah ! poor angel, see how she loved him,” the by-standers whisper to each other ; “ it is very touching ; Holy Virgin, heal her broken heart, sweet child.”

Towards night it is evident a storm is brewing. My room (where propriety secludes me) feels like an oven. The air is stifling, I can neither sit still, nor sleep, and the only book within reach is the middle volume of one of George Sand's earliest novels, which I nearly know by heart. In a jerky, scrappy sort of way, odds and ends flit through my brain as I wonder if I am left well off or poor, where I shall have to live now, whether black will become me ; and then it starts into my head, that Colonel Frazer's reply should

by this time, have been received. Ringing, I inquire.

“Certainly, mademoiselle, there is time, but possibly the gentleman was from home.”

“Then let another be sent directly.”

Mine host, recollecting, no doubt, that papa allowed me as much of my own will as if I had been a doll, stares, and stammers that the weather is terrible, the telegraph-office a good way off, and that there’s sure to be an answer in the morning.

“Despatch a duplicate of my former message immediately.”

Probably he thinks me a fury and a fiend besides, but at present I am an excellent customer, so what can the poor man do, but obey, to the infinite disgust of Auguste, who has to carry the order, through muck, through mire, cursing freely as he goes, no doubt.

An hour before midnight the storm is at its height, the house rocks from top to bottom, windows clatter, lightnings flash, thunder roars.

In the thick of it the expected telegram arrives. The landlord brings it up, with "Now didn't I tell you?" on his fat face.

I read, "Mrs. Frazer, 11, Manor Place, Edinburgh, to Roberta Gathorne, Schiffe Hotel, Baden-en-Suisse. My son leaves to-night for Baden, will be with you as soon as possible."

Her son? I never supposed Colonel Frazer young enough to have a mother alive. Always understood him to be somewhere about papa's date, indeed I am almost sure they were at school together. She must be a hundred at least.

The rain is pouring right down, into pitch darkness, so there's nothing to look at. I

wish I had not been in such a hurry about that second telegram, but there's no use crying over spilled milk. The thunder has cooled the air, so I shall try to sleep.

I do so, and dream that the Englishman who tore my dress is Colonel Frazer, and that we are waltzing together; he in a kilt plaid and highland bonnet; I, in widow's weeds.

Next morning, at 6 a.m., the funeral takes place, after a mildly Romish fashion.

My father belonged to the Church of England, and so I suppose do I, but one must arrange as one can at a pinch.

The officiating priest is the landlord's nephew, here, by chance, on a mission from Freiburg; a slim youth, with china-blue whites to his eyes, and a mouth that looks as if butter would not melt in it. The chapel-bell sounds muffled, in the morning mist, a small boy in white, swings his smoking

---



censer, ten or a dozen gentlemen from the hotel represent mourners.

In a black merino cloak and hood I follow on madame's arm, with a handkerchief at my eyes, and shriek hysterically as the clods rattle on the coffin-lid.

## CHAPTER III.

“SAE COMLIE TO BE SEEN.”

STANDING at the glass next forenoon, I am pleased to see that my mourning fits like a glove, and becomes me admirably.

I pose a little to try the side effect of my crape bonnet. A rap comes to the door.

“Please, mam’zelle,” says Lizette, “the gentleman has arrived. Here is his card. Oh! how beautiful he is! as handsome as St. John in the church: resembles him very much indeed. Such divine blue eyes, and shoulders like a dragoon. Ma foi! it is you, miss, that is lucky to have such a fine beau coming after you.”

Reading “Mr. Horace Frazer” on the

card, I fear there is some mistake, and besides no early companion of papa's could possibly resemble St. John.

I expand the rear-puffs of my dress, pass the brush up my front hair, which is “*à la Chinoise*,” and proceed to the salon, a huge, half-empty apartment, cool, airy, and obscure, by reason of the *persiennes* being closed. I move across the polished, rink-like floor, and am met midway by a tall man who has been peeping through the blinds, but now hastens forward with outstretched hand, saying,—

“It has been dreadful for you, I should have come sooner if I could.”

The light is too dim to see his face by, but the touch of his hand, and the sound of his voice, give me the strangest sensation of remembering them, far back in the ages ; of having been waiting for them, to fill a void somewhere in my nature. He leads me to the big, green

damask sofa that holds seven in a row, and sitting at my side, murmurs consolatory words about the "Orphan's God," and how delightful it is for papa to be hymning away, all day long, as the old woman in Hyperion wished to do.

I cannot imagine what is the matter with me! my heart feels melting over everything and everybody, and as I figure father in his shroud, tears actually spring to my eyes. Yet in the very act of wiping them away, the idea of *him* performing on a harp strikes me as so ludicrous that it is all I can do to suppress a giggle.

Poor old "Pater," who used to growl every time the brass band played during meals, and never sung a note in his life, I am sure.

"I can but too fully sympathize with your sorrow," my companion goes on to say: "We lost my own dear father just six weeks ago."

"Ah?"

“ Didn’t you know ? ”

“ No ; I do not think poor papa heard of it.”

“ The letter must have miscarried, they often do in these foreign offices—yes—that accounts for it ! My mother and I could not understand how so old a friend and relative as Mr. Gathorne took no notice of the announcement.”

After five minutes more of duty-speeches, suitable to the occasion, Mr. Frazer says,—

“ Of course you are aware Mr. Gathorne made a Will last year naming my father as your trustee, and nominating me as *his* substitute, in case of what unfortunately has occurred, did you know ? ”

“ Not I ; I am quite ignorant of papa’s affairs. Poor father ! if he had thought death so near he would have told me more, I dare say ! ”

“ No doubt ; I feel how disadvantageous it is for you to have no better adviser than

myself, but I shall do my best. By the way, here is a letter from my mother; she would have come with me, but has for years been too delicate to go from home. She thinks the best plan would be for you to come to Edinburgh and stay with her, till you make up your mind about the future. Have you any arrangements in view?"

"None whatever. I hoped Colonel Frazer would have settled everything—dear me! how sad it all is!"

"Very; my father would have been invaluable, but Providence has ordered otherwise. Perhaps Mr. Gathorne may have left some directions; shall we examine his papers? In any case there is no good in remaining here, is there, if you are able to travel?"

"I shall be glad to get away."

"Could you be ready to start by the 9.30 train to-morrow morning? or would that be too early?"

“ Not at all.”

“ Then I had better write at once to my mother; we can do the journey by instalments, if you find it too much to go right through.”

“ Thanks.”

For the first time in my experience I am shy. This immense happiness, which thrills me through and through, is as yet too great a stranger to feel quite at home with. I wish Time would stop short, and leave me and my guardian, sitting just as we are, for a century or so, yet would fain rush inconsistently away to some lonely spot, the lonelier the better.

“ Will you kindly look over poor father’s things without me ?” I ask, handing him the keys out of my apron pocket.

He assents in a manner at once protective and respectful, and gets up to open the door for me.

It is straight opposite one of the corridor

windows, which happens to be flung wide back, and lets in a stream of light on his head and shoulders.

The beauty of him almost takes away my breath. Ah! mon Dieu, mon Dieu! well might Lizette call him as lovely as St. John; he is fifty times handsomer than any saint ever was, or will be. Such golden, wavy hair, such adorable, violet eyes, I am certain he dances divinely, and I love him! love him! love him! as I never imagined anybody could worship anybody.

In the quiet of my own room I read Mrs. Frazer's letter.

“MY VERY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I feel deeply for you, alone among strangers at such a time. Horace will do all he can for your comfort. If health permitted, I should go to you myself, but he is such a dear, good boy, you may rely upon him as entirely as you could have done upon my husband. He is not quite



twenty-four, but so thoughtful and honourable, travelling under his care is quite different from being escorted by the generality of young men, besides he is shortly to be ordained a minister of the Church of Scotland. He will tell you all I would say, viz. that my house is your home, for as long as you choose. Harry Gathorne's child must always be peculiarly dear to me, not only on account of the cousinship, which, in so limited a connexion as ours, goes for something, but in memory of the 'merrie' days when he and I were young together.

“God bless you, dear.

“Ever very affectionately your friend,

“ADELINE FRAZER.”


## CHAPTER IV.

DOES HE OR DOES HE NOT?

“O Giovantù ! primavera della vita.”

A SOUTHERLY wind and a cloudy sky at five in the morning. Mr. Frazer and I in the graveyard, wading knee-deep among weeds, that almost smother the quaint little brass tablets it is the fashion here to be buried under. He wrote to Basle yesterday, to order a large Runic Cross of white marble, and now takes for granted I shall like to see the exact place where it is to be erected.

Draggling through moist, vegetable tangles, at so early an hour, is the last exercise I



should choose, but I seem to have lost the strong will, which used to be one of my chief characteristics, and bid fair to prove quite a model ward.

The silence here is impressively solemn. Gazing at the spot where papa lies, a sensation of tender regret sweeps through me, not so much for the loss of him, as because affection never brightened a single hour of the many years we spent together—years now told and done. It is for them my heart aches, for the love that might have been, and never can be now. Presently we retire from the cemetery in silence, and at the gate I pluck an ivy leaf “*In memoriam.*”

At the hotel we find breakfast laid at one end of the table in the large empty *salle*. Mr. Frazer is as kindly polite as possible, but not in a talking mood; so my thoughts rove hither and thither, and presently hit on the fact, that the seat I now occupy is the


identical one the Englishman used the day he dined.

How quickly one's feelings alter regarding people! It seems a century since I hoped and feared so foolishly about that stranger, whose very appearance I find it impossible to recall. It has already faded into a mental blur, all but the broad, low forehead and sharp, dark eyes.

At 9.30 we are off by train for England. The journey is charming, especially when about eleven, the sun shines out, and acts showman to the exquisite scenery.

Travelling always agrees with me, but to-day I feel in prime moral as well as bodily health.

Standing at papa's grave this morning, remembering and regretting, I made a vow to be sweet and meek for the rest of my days; and am already experiencing that the paths of peace are indeed the ways of



pleasantness, for my guardian and I get on as smoothly together as Adam and Eve in Eden.

On we rush, steaming it past mountains, rivers, forests, cities, till at midnight we halt in Paris, at the Louvre Hôtel, where our rooms were previously telegraphed for.

Next morning off again, past rows of streets, suburban maisonettes, liliputian vineyards, stretches of cultivated land, ditto of moor, hamlets skirting ancient churches, miles of Dunes, with pink flower-patches dotting their sandy turf; a strong smell of Ocean, Boulogne-sur-Mer, steamboat, roughish crossing, white cliffs a-head, Dover, railway journey, London.

“Now, Miss Gathorne,” says Mr. Frazer, when we step out on the platform just in time to catch the night mail for Edinburgh, “if you really wish to go right on say so, but this has been a fatiguing day, and you look tired.”


In point of fact I am perfectly worn out, but fancying him anxious to be home, I vote for at once taking our places in the train.

At York he rouses me from a nap, to swallow some coffee, but directly we get under weigh again I return to the "Land of Nod."

Besides ourselves, the only other passengers in the carriage are an old lady with three grandchildren. As I am dropping asleep I hear her say to Mr. Frazer, "How weary your wife looks, poor child!"

At 8.35 we steam into Modern Athens, and are presently cabbing it to Manor Place. My heart thumps as if it would jump out. It is one thing to look forward to your future as a fancy sketch, another to face it: as a gate you are compelled to enter within five minutes, quite uncertain whether misery or happiness lies on the other side.

Now, that I am so near Manor Place and



Mrs. Frazer, I shrink in fear, and feel strangely "outsided" by the fact, that Horace is at home, instead of being my "twin-bird-of-passage," as during the last two blissful days.

He is more silent than usual, or I suppose so, and am in my inmost soul disappointed, because my first appearance in Edinburgh, is not the event to him it is to me.

"Look! there is the Castle," he says, pointing it out as we drive along Princes Street, but my spirit is sore, and instead of responding brightly as usual, I can hardly be at the trouble to turn my eyes in the indicated direction.

The cab stops in a handsome street, most of the houses in which are shut up; the one we halt at, has the balcony like a little garden with flowers. There is a second cab behind with the luggage, and while the drivers carry it in, Mr. Frazer leads me to

the dining-room, bids me heartily welcome, and blushing furiously, says,—

Excuse me, my dear,—Miss Gathorne, I mean—till I let my mother know you are here.”

He vanishes. I look around upon my ideal of a cosy family-room. Claret morocco furniture, ditto reps hangings, Turkey carpet, pale sage-green walls, and full lengths in oil, of my guardian, the late colonel, and his wife. Considering the depressed state of my mind five minutes ago, the rapidity with which I feel at home, strikes me as a psychological phenomenon ; and I can quite believe that certain objects seen for the first time by Mahomet, during his transit to Paradise, appeared old friends on the return journey ; for when, after a cursory survey of the apartment, my eyes again rest upon Horace’s portrait, I feel as the dove must have done when it got back to the Ark.



Mrs. Frazer enters on her son's arm, the sweetest, silver-haired, dark-eyed old lady imaginable, with one of those voices that sounds like a spoken caress.

"Will you throw off your wraps here, my dear?" she says, "or go up to your own room?"

Accustomed to Continental ways, I elect to make my toilet where I am, and stepping over to the chimney-piece mirror, smooth my hair, pinch up my frill, give my skirts a shake, and am ready for breakfast.

The table-furnishings are tasteful, plain mauve china with a dead gold border, and butterfly-handles to the cups, the silver, massive, antique, and shining.

Horace—in my own mind I mostly think of him as Horace—makes a capital host, and looks better if possible at the foot of his own table.

What, I wonder, would the scarlet-coated

colonel, staring from his gold frame above the side-board, think, could he see us all so merry, and he only seven weeks dead? Yet I don't believe they forget him; even in their liveliest talk there is something that reminds me of the angels in heaven, not the least like the "Goody Argot" many people put on and off with their black gowns and crape hat-bands.

I have decided to make my home here, paying 150*l.* a year for board, although, till I insisted, they refused to take a farthing.

Mother and son are both charming to live with, and the house arrangements go like clock-work; such a pretty house it is too, the drawing-rooms pale blue satin and ebony, with plenty of old cabinets, pictures, and china. My bed-chamber, the dearest little pink and white nest—maple, and chintz that looks as if a shower of rose-buds had fallen over it.

Town is deserted at present, but even were it the height of the season, Mrs. Frazer would not be receiving company so soon after her husband's death.

As it is, we are all three very much together, and learn more of one another's *innermost* than if visitors were coming and going.

The city is beautiful, quite up to my expectations. Mrs. Frazer takes me drives occasionally, and as Horace and I are capital pedestrians, we enjoy almost daily "constitutional" beyond the suburbs.

He is preparing for holy orders, or, as they say here, getting ready to be ordained. He doats upon flowers, so I have *ordained* myself to the office of keeping his study-window supplied with fresh ones.

Till I came here I should just as soon have thought of sailing to the Antipodes, like Ponce de Léon, in quest of the fountain of perpetual

youth, as expecting to find any child of Adam, good all round.

Now, I am ready to pin my faith to the possibility of—at least—*masculine* perfection, having, in the most unprejudiced manner, studied Mr. Frazer's character, and failed to discover a single flaw. Indeed, when he opens the harmonium of an evening, and plays his favourite "hymns," it is as good as being at church, and makes me feel so religious it is quite exhilarating.

As my guardian, he has had considerable correspondence with papa's London solicitors, but everything is now satisfactorily arranged, and my clear income 395*l.* a year. There are one or two minor details he is not quite up to, but as they are mere technicalities of no moment, he says he shall leave them over, till his friend and legal adviser, Patrick Beatoun, comes back.

This Mr. Beatour, who is at the Bar, and

/

whose name I begin to be sick of, is the son of a long-deceased brother officer of Colonel Frazer, and although four years older than Horace, was at school with him.

As the time of his return draws nearer, the very mention of him rouses my corruption, for of late my guardian has been more and more making a confidante of me.

Not letting me into secrets,—so pure and candid as he is, I do not suppose he has such things—but telling me all his thoughts and speculative theories, about the “eternal verities,” and so forth.

I do not pretend to understand a tithe of his notions, but he declares that sharing them with me is an ever-new delight, and it is just because I feel this growing intimacy so precious, that I hate Patrick Beatoun beforehand, and have worked myself into a presentiment that he is fated to injure me.

To-morrow is the first of October, and to-day September is saying farewell in a perfect tempest of wind and rain, so driving or walking is out of the question.

Mrs. Frazer is taking a siesta after lunch, Horace, as usual, grinding theology in the library.

As we were quitting table I stuck a carnation in his button-hole, and while saying "thanks" he coloured to the roots of his hair.

Sitting here alone, toasting my toes at the back drawing-room fire, and fervently wishing Patrick Beatoun had never been born, it all at once flashes on me, that by presenting my guardian with a carnation, I have actually, in floral parlance, proposed to him. Having had it done to myself, I *ought* to know.

I do not imagine he understands the lan-

guage of flowers, but if he does, good gracious ! What must he think of me ?

With flushing cheeks I recollect how he reddened, and ask myself, "Why ?"

Then linked to this line of thought comes another,—

"Does he love me ?"

Gliding on, in unruffled happiness from day to day, the question has never till this moment faced me seriously. Perhaps I have taken too much for granted, and let the wish stand father to the belief. But now, with that odious lawyer coming, I feel bound to investigate the state of my guardian's affections as well as my own.

Do I love him ? Yes, yes, yes ! I am tied fast to his chariot wheels, and can only pray he may never choose to drive over my crushed and bleeding heart, for if he wanted to do so, I should certainly lie still and let him.

Does he love me? I wish I knew! He likes me, and enjoys my company, but alas! that alone is not love,—and yet?—

At four o'clock, when Mrs. Frazer comes in, I am still puzzling over the problem, and as far as ever from solving it.



## CHAPTER V

GOD KNOWS.

“ . . . Sad and low  
Sing me so.  
Shadow-veiled . . . the years.”

WILL you make tea for us, my dear ?” says my hostess one frosty evening in October.

With a little nod and smile signifying “gladly,” I lay aside my bead-work and go over to the table, where an old-fashioned silver urn is humming a quaint steam-tune.

Horace and I had a long country-walk before dinner, and although, on looking back, I cannot recall anything particular he said, I am certain all is right between us.

He is poring over the *Cornhill* in a comfortable easy chair before the fire, at the other side of which his mother reclines on a sofa.

I wear a high, black gown, illustrated with jet, and a white camelia at my throat, which I flatter myself is becoming.

Standing, I fill the cups, carry hers to Mrs. Frazer, and then, as Horace is too deep in the magazine to look up, hand him his.

He starts, apologizes, and receives it with his own bright smile, saying jocularly, "Mille pardons, mademoiselle, for being so lazy."

The words recall the English stranger who trod on my skirt at Baden, and with the remembrance, comes back my old terror of something bad being about to happen.

I call myself a fool. Are not we three just beginning another of our delightful evenings? Is not Horace going presently to read aloud to us, while his mother and I

work? and will he not afterwards, at my request, sing and play that magnificent, spirit-stirring "Holy, Holy, Holy"?


The door is flung open, a servant announces "Mr. Beatoun," and in walks the identical man, to recollect whom has just given me cold shivers.

A-glow with pleasure Horace flies to welcome him, so does Mrs. Frazer, and then I am introduced.

We bow; my heart beats so, I almost fancy they must hear it, but he does not appear to recognize me in the least.

If I hated him unknown, as a possible rival for Horace's favour, I feel indignant now at not being remembered, after all the worry and anxiety I gave myself about him at Baden. It is an insult to the beauty I consider my crown and glory.

Not that I really care personally half so much for my good looks as I used to do, but they are



additionally precious as the means of charming my guardian ; and the fact that this man was so little impressed by my face, as to forget he ever saw it, gives me a horrible sense of insecurity. I would willingly stab or poison him where he stands, but unfortunately this is the nineteenth century, so presently I am offering him a cup of tea, and politely asking if he takes cream and sugar ?

It appears he has just returned from a six-weeks' walking-excursion on the Continent, and he and Horace find so much to say to each other, that I feel slightly shunted, and in a dumb rage.

Sitting mentally counting the beads in my embroidery, the vague sensation of "something about to happen," which has from time to time perplexed me, crystallizes into the form and shape of this Mr. Beatoun as my evil genius. Please heaven he does not prove Horace's as well.

With his dark complexion, and lean, square shoulders, he is so utterly unlike my noble-looking, golden-haired guardian, that I am involuntarily reminded of a picture I once saw in Dresden ; a hawk, that has pounced from behind upon a white dove, withdrawing its bloody beak in preparation for a second dab.

My dislike to this lawyer has no better foundation than the school-boy's to Dr. Fell, but is a fact nevertheless.

Mr. Beatoun remains till it is too late for reading or music, or anything but prayers and bed. In my own room I have a quiet cry over our first spoiled evening.

Will it be the last ?

## CHAPTER VI.

AS A VOICE IN THE NIGHT.

“Love was born in the Spring,  
And died before the harvesting.”

“POOR fellow, he is indeed to be pitied,” I remark, helping myself to a couple of slices of bread and butter laid together, and as thin as wafers.

“Yes! indeed he is,” answers Mrs. Frazer, lifting a piece of sugar gingerly with the tongs and dropping it into her cup. “Very much to be felt for; everybody says he has indomitable perseverance, and talents far above par, but without law-agents to employ him, what can a poor advocate do? and it

must be weary work waiting for practice on 140*l.* a year. That is all he has, and how he contrives to make ends meet is a mystery. His *one* ambition is to rise in his profession poor boy, and he has an intense belief in his power of doing so, if ever he get the chance. His parents used to be so much with the colonel and me in our early married life, that we always looked upon Pat as one of ourselves."

"But if his abilities are so well known, why is he not employed?"

"My dear child, that's all you know about it; a young advocate may be Solon and Demosthenes combined, but unless he have legal practitioners ready to give him a case or two to begin with, he may wait long enough before the *public* asks his price. Of course, instances to the contrary do occur, but the number of young men who pass for the bar so far exceeds the demand, that the smallest scrap of business is grabbed at for

them, by their friends, nay, sometimes paid for, by the bestowal of other favours on the giver. Pat, I am told, is spoken of by his compeers in the Parliament House, as safe to "sport ermine" some day, but as he has neither kith nor kin to give him a lift in the meantime, I don't think there's much chance of it. I really believe the best thing he could do, would be to look out for a wife with money, to help him along, till practice comes, though Horace always insists he is more addicted to law-books, than pretty girls."

"Why doesn't he write, or do something to assist his funds?"

"Well, dear, with beef at a shilling a pound, I'm sure they need helping out; but writing is not his forte, and teaching or clerking would be *infra dig.* for a member of the bar, although, I am sorry to say, things are very different from what they were when



my grandfather sat on the bench. Then, the bar was exclusively the profession of a gentleman, now, Horace's tailor has a nephew an advocate, and in pretty good practice too, I understand."

Mrs. Frazer and I are at our cosy afternoon-tea, discussing the family-friend, three weeks after his return.

He and I are rather allies now, although, at first, when I found it was customary for him to drop in, most evenings, I was miserable lest he should, in slang phrase, put my nose out of joint with Horace.

The reverse is the case, but it came to pass in rather a round-about way.

When he arrived evening after evening, and while quite polite, still seemed insensible to my fascinations, it put me on my mettle, and I determined at all risks to show Horace, that he himself was not the only man in the world, whose heart was at my disposal. So

all my old tricks and dodges were aired for the advocate's benefit, but, as my guardian says, he is not a "lady's-man," and before I could get my bird near enough to put salt on its tail, I had to go farther than I intended, and try downright flirtation, though of a mild sort.

Pat Beatoun is no more to be compared to Horace, than a tom-cat to a seraph, but it is human nature to swear by your own performances, and having tamed the studious lawyer, I continue to patronize him. "A poor thing but mine own, sir," as Shakespeare very sensibly puts it.

The Frazers are certainly the simplest-souled people I ever fell in with. The old lady sets down my flirtation with the advocate entirely to the score of foreign manners, and as for her son, he is so nobly loyal, that I believe he actually likes me better for taking the trouble to thaw his friend.

“Shall we keep the tea warm, dear, or ring to have the things taken away?” asks Mrs. Frazer, when our ante-prandial refection is finished.

“Well, he can hardly be back, I should think, before five, it is a long way, and the young woman, who brought the message, said her mother was worse to-day, so he may be detained.”

It is of Horace we are speaking.

He is gone to Stockbridge to visit a poor old mangle-woman whom he saw break her arm in the street last week, by slipping on a bit of orange-peel and—how good he is!—not only did he take her home in a cab, but finding her as ignorant of religion as any beast, has gone daily to read the Bible, besides giving charity, which, I daresay she thinks a great deal more of.

Her daughter, whom I happened to see when she came with the message this fore-

noon, looks disreputable, sings in the chorus at cheap concerts, and Horace says, keeps their wretched home like a pig-sty; so I think, poor fellow, he has got a choice corner of Satan's garden for his missionary operations.

I wanted to accompany him yesterday, but fever is often about in those low neighbourhoods, and he would not take me.

It is fortunate we sent away the tea-things, for he returns barely in time to change his coat before dinner, and looks so fagged his mother makes him have an additional glass of wine.

"Horry, my dear boy," she says later in the evening, "I hope you have not been near infection, you are quite pale, and not like yourself."

"Don't bother, mother," he answers wearily, "perhaps I have caught cold, I shall

go early to bed; and I daresay be all right in the morning."

I do not observe anything wrong with him except that he seems a little out of spirits, but perhaps, as he fancies, it is the effect of cold.

We take our usual places in the back drawing-room—Mrs. Frazer on her couch, Horace opposite in his easy chair, I, midway betwixt them, knitting a green silk purse, our faces turned to the cheerful hearth, like so many fire-worshippers.

"If there be upon earth an Elysium of bliss,  
It is this, it is this!"

would be the impression of anybody viewing us and our surroundings, yet we are all more silent than usual. Mrs. Frazer still seems uneasy about her son, while I keep wondering wistfully what it can possibly be he is so thoughtful about.

After tea, instead of finishing the tale in *Temple Bar* he has been reading to us, he says good-night, long before the usual hour, and I sorely miss his "Even-song," that of late has become quite an institution, and this break, in the regular recurrence of which, saddens me.

After a while Mrs. Frazer goes to see him "comfortable" for the night, and when she returns we set our feet on the fender-stool, give the fire a good stir, and settle for a cosy chat, which gradually deepens into confidential earnestness.

Apropos of a chance speech of mine, the story of her *own* youth oozes out, and quaintly pathetic it is to hear the white-haired woman, recalling the merry days when her ringlets were raven black, and her eyes admired for their soft brilliancy.

With a sweet reflective sadness on her gentle face, she relates how once upon a time

it was currently reported she and papa were to be married, which rumour would in all probability have become fact, if one unlucky summer, her Aunt Grizzel had not met with an accident, and sent for her niece to Cumberland for a couple of months.

“Ah ! my dear Roberta,” she continues, “while I was absent, Harry (your papa, my dear) flirted—so it was said—with a friend of my own, and made his attentions so conspicuous they got talked of, and her father insisted, that having brought a young lady into the public mouth, he was bound to marry her. Poor Harry ! he was always so easy-tempered and musical, and (I don’t know if you remember your mamma) she played and sang beautifully. It is sometimes a mistake, I think, to be too amiable ! Harry could not, for the life of him, endure putting anybody out of sorts, and how handsome he was ! all the girls were in love with him.

People said he had jilted me shamefully. But I knew how easily he could be swayed by the impulse of the moment, and always maintained he had not flirted intentionally with his wife. His manners were so attractive? and there was such a natural sort of chivalry about him, poor fellow, that he never could help trying to make himself agreeable to any young woman, if at all good-looking. Your mother and I were related, so when she, as a matter of course, asked me to be one of her bridesmaids, pride said, 'Don't refuse;' but I should not wish my worst enemy to suffer what I did at the wedding, pretending to be in high spirits, wishing I could lie down and die."

"Indeed it injured my health for many a year; but God makes no mistakes, and, after all, I lived to praise Him for a happy lot, for although I was close on thirty, when my dear husband first met me, I do not



believe a happier couple ever summered it and wintered it, through a quarter of a century."

"Dear me! such a long time!" I ejaculate, thinking privately that it was hardly worth while marrying at thirty, and that the conjugal felicity of so aged a pair must needs be too prosaic and passionless to deserve the name.

"Yes," she answers, "it *was* a long time to be spared to each other; and it makes me very sad indeed to reflect, that the very week he was taken from me, we were to have given a dinner party to celebrate our 'silver-wedding.'"

We remain two or three minutes gazing silently into the fire; I, beholding wonderful flame-phantoms; she, poor old soul, rehearsing, no doubt, the tragedy of her youth—recalling the gay-hearted, light-heeled lover who caused it, and the husband who, what-

ever his good qualities may have been, was certainly no beauty, if his portrait be reliable.

Among the fire-pictures, appearing and vanishing in the coals, I discern a Runic Cross, and my thoughts fly right off to the primitive little God's Acre at Baden, and the six feet of earth there I have a special interest in.

With an unspeakable shrinking from the mazes and involvements of human existence, I vainly try to identify my furious-tempered, unsympathetic, music-defying, gouty parent, with the fascinating lady-killer, as not only bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh, but, at this very moment, crumbling mutually to dust in the same grave. The idea makes me shudder; an icy breath seems to blow direct from that tomb, blighting the bloom of my life. Is this world

---

only a howling desert, after all, across which we must every one plod to sunless seas of death?

I shiver. Just then, from somewhere in the thick darkness, the voice of a kindred spirit seems to answer the voice of my heart.

Moved by a sudden impulse, I fling my arms round Mrs. Frazer, kiss her once, twice, thrice, and next moment, with a rush of red to my cheeks, wonder what tempted me to do it?

But no, in my inmost soul I do *not* wonder. If not the very *rose-tree* itself, hasn't she dwelt near it?

The clock on the mantel-shelf tinkles "eleven" in silver chimes. Such a pretty little clock it is, with a most suggestive ornament on the top, a boy and girl blowing soap bubbles. The golden basin, the pink-

cheeked children, the dancing crystal globelets flying up, "up and away." Quite a homily in Dresden china.

We resume our conversation, and ere long, are, in committee phrase, "sitting" upon Horace and his "chum" for, I should say, the twentieth time at least.

"No, my dear," answers the old lady to a remark of mine, "I do not think they would originally have become intimate from choice, but how many friendships are the result of circumstances ! After Lieutenant Beatoun's death, my husband and I made a home of our house to the motherless boy, who, being four years older than Horace, was naturally looked up to by the little fellow, who always was a gentle, unselfish child."

"Which is more than can be said for Mr. Beatoun ?"

"Yes. As a mere infant, he had a will of iron, and generally managed to carry his point.

Of late years my husband used to say that Pat's bull-dog pertinacity was not a bad quality in an advocate who has to fight his way single-handed. I think it helps him to hold on at the bar, when a differently constituted man might give it up in despair."

"He and Mr. Frazer were at school together, were they not?"

"Yes; and years afterwards we happened to settle in Edinburgh at the very time he came up to college. It was of consequence to him to have friends to visit whenever he pleased, so we gave him the run of the house, and Horace, who is firm in his friendships, resumed the intimacy upon its old footing."

"They always seem to me to draw together upon the principle that makes opposites naturally attractive."

"With men and women that sometimes holds good. I am not so sure it does where one sex only is concerned; but I defy any

body not to get along peaceably with Horace. His only fault (and it amounts to one) is thinking too little of his own talents and goodness, and too highly of other people's. You may fancy that, being his mother, I am prejudiced, but I do not believe it; he is the best boy I ever knew, and often makes me fear he is too perfect to live long."

We sit awhile silently gazing at the fire, her eyes glittering in the flame-leaps with unshed tears.

She wipes them away, as we take up the question of Horace's future.

"To be a clergyman," she says, "was always his wish, and sure am I he will adorn both the doctrine and the office. At my death he will have 600*l.* a year, so with a living of, say, 300*l.* or 400*l.*, will not be badly off for a plain Scotch minister. A country charge would be his own choice, but my life hangs by a thread, and I must always reside

within easy reach of good medical advice. I fret sometimes about how we should arrange, if he got a church far from a town, but it is faithless. God will do what is best when the time comes.

“If he wanted to marry, I should never stand in his way. Some mothers have a horror of their sons taking wives to themselves; I love my darling far too well to hinder his happiness; but he has told me more than once, that his mind is made up, never to propose to any girl till he is settled in a charge.”

“If you were leaving town, what would poor Mr. Beatoun do without your fireside? One of his own does not seem a very likely contingency.”

“On the contrary, I think he ought to lose no time in marrying a wife who can keep the pot boiling. His brains and application will no doubt tell some day, but while the grass

is growing what if the steed should starve ? Just suppose fifty or sixty pounds of his little income should be lost, what would become of him ? it would literally, poor fellow ! be a case of cannot dig and ashamed to beg. I am not an advocate for fortune-hunting, but there's no rule without exception, and in Pat's case it might turn out well, possibly grandly, for the lady."

I smile to my myself at the dear old woman's truly feminine logic. Does she actually think I am smitten with Pat's "black-a-vised" countenance, and square, thin shoulders, and is she playing the magnanimous at her son's expense ?

*I* in love with Pat Beatoun ! Oh, Horace, Horace, the very idea is blasphemy against you, sleeping off your cold upstairs, blissfully ignorant how we have been taking your name in vain !

With a whiz, and twelve tinkles, the time-



piece announces midnight. While we have been palavering, those cherry-cheeked china youngsters have gone on dancing their shiny balls merrily up in the air. When the gas is out and darkness reigns, they will continue at it. I would parabolize on the subject if I were not too sleepy.

"Dear me, I had no idea it was so late!" exclaims Mrs. Frazer, as we both get to our feet.

Seizing the poker, I rattle the red cinders through the bars like a shower of burning hail. She lifts the big chunks of coal out with the tongs, for fear of fire.

Affectionate "Good nights," after which I mount to my pretty pink and white chamber, ten times more in love with my guardian than ever.

When the maid brings me my hot water next morning, it annoys me to find I have been dreaming again, exactly what I did

at Baden-en-Suisse. Pat Beatoun (whom I suppose to be Colonel Frazer) waltzing with me; he, in kilt, plaid and feathers, I, in widow's weeds.

Of course dreams go by contraries, though I fail to see any consolation in a reverse rendering of my vision.

Formerly I should have consulted my old pack of cards, but to-night, when Horace plays "Holy, Holy, Holy," I know I should feel unhappy for having tried to read my fate by means of what country folks call "the Devil's Books."

## CHAPTER VII.

“O! COME THEY IN PEACE OR COME THEY  
IN WAR?”

“I cannot tell you how it was,  
But this I know, it came to pass.”

BEING in such deep mourning, neither Mrs. Frazer, Horace nor I, go into society, but friends pop in to lunch, now and then.

One Indian-summery day, near the end of October, there arrives a family called Morrison, father, mother, and three daughters. Mrs. Morrison, who, it appears, was at school with mamma, seems greatly taken with me, and says I am a beautified likeness of her old companion. Mr. Morrison, a hearty, off-hand

individual, owns a considerable estate, called Heatherton, in Perthshire, where they reside all the year round ; but as the youngest girl has been rather out of health lately, he has taken lodgings in town for a month, by way of giving her a little change.

The daughters would be goodish-looking, if their heads were not carrotty, and of all things, red hair is to me the most odious. But to be sure, one man's meat is another fellow's poison, and that queer hump-backed Signor Fioppi, papa and I knew at Brügg, and who once saw Byron's Countess Guiccioli, declared her ringlets were unmitigated brick-colour.

Having a lecture to attend, Horace does not appear at lunch, but it "riles" me to observe, the middle Miss Morrison simpering and giggling every time his name is mentioned.

My guardian and I are so much together, that I have got used to feeling as good as

gold, but after all, drinking tea does not teach us Chinese, and the sight of Miss Etta's blushes, makes me run over with original sin.

Yet how foolish it is of me!

When his mother was out of the room yesterday, didn't he say he still treasures the carnation I gave him? and ask for my photo?—small locket size—what more would I have?

I know the “ropes” in love's theatre so thoroughly, and have played in so many of his dramas myself, that it takes a good deal to make me believe in affection being any thing but acting, but there's no mistake about the transparent candour of my guardian's mind and soul.

Yes, I am an ass, and a jealous ass, to feel worried because old acquaintances like the Morrisons look conscious whenever they hear his name. Is it his fault, if the silly

ninnies admire him? No! A penny cat may look at a king.

Strong in what pugilists term "new wind" after this brief breathing-time of self-communion, I blandly respond to Miss Etta's smirk—it would take two inches of solid kiss to cover her mouth—and make myself agreeable to her and her sisters; precious up-hill work it is too!

There they sit staring out of their round grey eyes, like three little owlets, thinking no doubt what a horridly fast young woman I am; wondering whether I smoke cigars or a hubble-bubble; and impiously thanking their stars, that no clergyman in his sane senses could possibly saddle himself with so godless a help-mate.

Fools! fools! know ye not that *che sara sara*, that it is the staying horse wins! and that sooner or later "Mrs. Horace" I am determined to be? To compete with me,

would simply be, what a French “modiste” once called my tulle bonnet, a “ravishing futility,” jolly good fun while you are making your runnings, vanity and vexation of spirit, at the end of the race.

After lunch Morrison “père” goes to meet a friend at his club, and the rest of us return to the drawing-room, to be favoured by Miss Etta with a musical “mélange” in the thunder-and-lightning style. In the noisiest part of it an andante movement occurs, during the performance of which, a ring is heard at the front door, and with an inward sneer I observe the player’s hands fall a-shaking, while her face reddens most unbecomingly.

The sister-owlets also flutter in anticipation of Horace’s entrance, stretch their necks, lick their lips nervously, and clear their throats.

The door is flung open, and Mr. Beatoun

follows his name in, carrying a curious 193-year-old little volume I asked him yesterday, to bring me a sight of, from "The Advocate's Library." It appears bound in used-up shoe-leather, and has got a Latin title signifying "Cases of Conscience Solved." Seeing it quoted in a super-sensational novel roused my curiosity, and certainly Pat has lost no time in doing my behest, a politeness the more to be appreciated, as, having no business, he cannot afford to appear sufficiently at leisure, for paying morning visits. In fact this is his first, since my arrival, and it is an odd coincidence that it should happen at this particular hour, for the three Morrisons grin from ear to ear, and evidently think themselves in luck.

Thanks to the "facings" I have put him through, he does not behave a bit like the "woman-hater" Horace tells him he is, but fair play is a jewel, and I did not bargain for




being practically shelved, while my pupil exercised his newly acquired airs and graces, upon *other* people, before my very face.

What he does, or does not do, is not of the slightest consequence, but certainly it is exasperating to see a man I have made believe to flirt with, so conducting himself, that those three country hoydens can hardly fail to fancy themselves more attractive than I.

He has to thank me for putting him up to a few things, but I have yet to teach him that a woman, ever so slightly scorned, is a dangerous animal, and that tit for tat is fair play all the world over.

When he drops in as usual to-morrow evening, I shall cautiously but surely, begin to make him *really* fall in love with me, and when he reaches the fatuous phase, coolly throw him over, with a “Mille pardons, monsieur, for breaking your heart.” (The one lesson will be enough probably.)



When on her feet to go, Mrs. Morrison says to Mrs. Frazer,—

“ I know you are not visiting, but will your young people spend to-morrow evening quietly with us ? We are such old friends, it is not like going among strangers, and we shall be quite alone, unless Mr. Beatoun will do us the pleasure ? ”

He accepts with unnecessary effusion, and I should enjoy throttling that Octopus of a woman, grabbing so barefacedly at possible husbands for her girls.

At the appointed hour, when Horace and I arrive, we find Mr. Beatoun sharing with the three young ladies an ottoman under the centre gaselier.

Mrs. Frazer told me this morning, that they will each have 10,000*l.*, which renders Pat's sudden intimacy perfectly disgusting.

It strikes me it is Annie, the sickly one,

he has an eye after, and I should just like to know how much less than murder it is for a man to pick out the one of three sisters who is least likely to trouble him long?

What would she think if she knew why he fawns on her in particular?

The Misses Morrison are got up regardless of expense and propriety, in flame-coloured silks. How can any creatures with eyes in their heads wear such things? and the room hung with rhubarb moreen too, it is enough to give one bilious fever!

None of the family has the knack of “entertaining,” so the evening is sufficiently “slow,” except to Horace and me. We are in Paradise, in the shadow of a huge book-case, at the off-end of the room, far removed from the crowded ottoman, whose occupants fire off occasional truisms at each other, like minute guns at sea.

I do not think I ever fully appreciated till

now how truly charming my guardian is, and how nicely he makes love too, when Madame Mère is out of the way ; but perhaps it is natural a man should feel awkward going through that performance, with his mother looking on, and making notes like Captain Cuttle.

Horace's very pronounced admiration to-night is, however, not quite a miracle, either, taking cause and effect into account.

It is all very fine to say that beauties and geniuses are the last persons to find out their own superiority. In my opinion it is just the other way, and I am perfectly aware I am looking my best, with my great, soft, dark eyes shining under their long lashes, and dressed in a plain black crape gown, unrelieved by any ornament, except the exquisite diamond cross, which was one of poor mamma's wedding gifts.

The cab fetches us at half-past ten, and at

home, when Horace is helping me off with my wraps in the lobby, he, all of a sudden, looks me in the eyes, takes my hand in both of his, and is beginning, “My dearest—” when Mrs. Frazer steps out of the dining-room.

Whatever may have been his former resolution about not speaking of marriage, till placed in a charge, I am certain he was on the point of proposing, and it is really too aggravating to be stopped, when five minutes more would have settled the business. How truly does the poet sing,—

“Ah! the little more, how much it is !  
And the little less, and what worlds away.”

At least, not so bad as *that* perhaps ; but for once I sincerely wish my beloved’s mamma at the Back-of-Beyond.

Wine and water are set ready in the dining-room, and while Horace is in the act

of helping me to a glass of sherry, the table-maid enters to say, that,—

“The man and woman who have already called twice to-night for Mr. Frazer, are now in the library.”

“Who can it be, at this hour!” exclaims his mother; “thieves probably. Mary should not have let them in. Don’t you recollect how Professor Buchanan had his silver ink-stand stolen in that way? Make haste, Horrie, there’s a good boy!”

It is an old German “freat” that there is a special minute in each of our lives, when we are “beautiful exceedingly,” although nothing remarkable at other times. Surely Horace’s moment of supreme handsomeness is when with a cheery, “Never fear, mother,” he nods back to us from the door.

I sip my sherry and water, and amuse the old lady with details of the tea-drinking, chatting, sipping; chatting, sipping;

wondering who the visitors can possibly be?

By-and-by our conversation flags—fifteen minutes—sitting opposite the clock, I notice how time flies.

We fall silent.—The tic-tic-tic of the pendulum makes me so nervous, I could scream.—Twenty minutes!—Twenty-five!—I listen as if for the crack of doom.—My heart beats acutely,—there is a choke at my throat.

“Can it be widow Burridge’s daughter come to say her mother is worse?” suggests Mrs. Frazer, as white as a sheet. “Horace went there yesterday, but I forgot to ask how he found her. I am sure, dear boy, he has done more than a minister’s duty to her.”

She reaches her hand for a glass of water, but it trembles so, she cannot lift the caraffe. I am nearly as bad, but by a great effort of self-control, contrive to give her a drink.

We hear the library door open, and footsteps crossing to the front one, but no voices. A dreadful feeling of suffocation seizes me.

We sit staring at each other as if spell-bound.

The street-door shuts, but instead of coming straight to us, Horace returns to the library for five or six minutes.

"My darling boy!" cries his mother, when he makes his appearance, "I was becoming quite nervous. What did they want? who are they? I thought your old woman was getting better?"

"Well, no! It was the daughter."

"Was the man her brother? I didn't know there was a son?"

"Nor is there; he's her 'young man,' I fancy."

He says this with the dreariest attempt at a smile, trying to seem unconcerned, but



there is a quiver in his voice, and a look in his eyes that agonize me with pity.

If his visitors had come from the other world, to inform him he should be a corpse by this time to-morrow, he could not look worse. Yet even now, he is so gentle and saint-like, that I feel as if I could throw my arms round him to shield him from his foes, be they men, women, or devils. If he has an enemy, he or she must be of the latter persuasion. No *human* creature could hate one so pure and single-hearted.

Urged by I cannot tell what, I turn out two of the gas burners, and lower the other half-mast high, saying lightly, “ Well, good people, I do not know how you feel, but my eyes are drawing straws, so I vote for going to bed. Remember, monsieur, if I haven’t a satisfactory night’s rest, I do not promise to take that long walk to Corstosphine with you to-morrow.”

“I am tired too,” says Mrs. Frazer, rising.

He goes to the side-board, lights our candles, and as he hands me mine, says, “Good night, my very dearest,” loud enough for his mother to hear, if she cares to listen.

The words are not spoken in the fond, cooing fashion one might expect from an all but declared lover, but flung out defiantly, as if he beheld a demon at my back, about to drag me away, and dared him to do it.

“She is mine, mine only, in spite of all the fiends in the bottomless pit.” This, or something like it, is what, to my infinite amazement, I read in his face.

After the usual brushings and combings in my own room, I put out the light and sit down to think, in front of the fire, which lays its ruddy fingers on several pieces of furniture, making fine chiaroscuros of them.

Staring into the burning coals, till my eye-

balls ache, I pile up all manner of horrors, and conclude with a heavy sigh—for myself, or Guardian ? perhaps both.

Kneeling at the low chair I have been sitting on, I try to pray. I think I remember my mother teaching me, “This night, I lay me down to sleep,” and since coming to Scotland, have rattled it off, when not too sleepy, or joyous, but life seems all at once deepened into such a dread mystery, that I need a fuller, stronger petition.

Ever since I can recollect when I prayed at all, which was not often, it was to a mental picture of a gigantic old man in white, seated motionless upon a huge throne, with a gold crown on his head, and a sceptre in his hand, but to-night my mind requires a more cognisant, sympathetic deity.

So I essay to describe my chaotic fears to—I do not exactly know what—an impalpable “something,” pervading an incomprehensible

“upwards,” beyond the visible sky, racking my brains, by endeavouring to condense all this into a specific shape.

Arrived at “Amen,” the straining sensation in my forehead relaxes like the loosening of a tight belt, and, drawing a long breath of relief, I rise from my knees satisfied, that though my case has not perhaps been logically expounded to “up yonder,” I may now at least go to sleep with a quiet conscience.

Easier said than done. I lay my body down to rest, betwixt the smoothest of linen sheets, under the puffiest of eider-down quilts, but not a wink can I get. Reclining on the flat of my back does not mend the matter, nor doubling up the bolster and heaping pillows on it, to raise my head, nor tossing them overboard, and lying prone, as if I had spinal complaint. Not another position can I hit on, unless it be to stand on

my head acrobat fashion, and even a Fakir could hardly sleep so, however the "pose" might add to his sanctity.

In short, it is a fit of the fidgets, that ails me, so up I get, strike a light, and take from my work-box the *et ceteras* for glove-mending.

Sitting in front of the fire in my scarlet dressing-gown, ready to commence operations upon a faithless pair of "kids" that split at the first trying-on, my brain, all at once, sets up business for itself without consulting me, and begins rhyming over and over some lines, which along with a scrap of faded pink satin ribbon, were found in a locket round papa's neck when he expired.

Till Mrs. Frazer told me her story, I took for granted they were relics of my mother, but now have doubts on the subject, as the date on the back of the paper is two years before I was born. These are the lines,—

“ Then fare thee well, my own dear love,  
This world has now for us  
No greater grief, no pain above  
The pain of parting thus, dear love,  
The pain of parting thus.”

Poor papa ! is it possible you ever felt like that ? and that it was blighted affection which rendered you so cross and sour, and made you detest music, and handsome foreigners, and be altogether most uncomfortable to live with ?

My father dawns on me, as quite a new revelation. Long past tiffs and duels crowd back, and I rehearse them with a tender sympathy for my antagonist, which, felt earlier, might have staved off our fights altogether, since it takes two to make a quarrel.

And my mother ! I can just recollect her as tall, pale, thin, and ill-tempered. Poormamma, why did she put her life all wrong, by

marrying a man who had almost to be forced into the match.

Dropping my still unmended glove in my lap, I weep quietly.

When, after a while, my tears cease, I find I have unconsciously been shedding them for Horace, as well as my father and mother, like the gobelins-weavers, working their patterns at the back, and never seeing the actual picture, till finished and cut off the loom.

## CHAPTER VIII.

SANS PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE.

. . . . .  
 "The world to wreck may crumble,  
 But the flames of the love I bear thee will  
 Flash out, as the ruins tumble."

HEINE.

WHEN quite a small mite of a child, in India,  
 I heard somebody speak of an English  
 November as the gloomy month, when  
 the natives hang and drown themselves,  
 and a dismal conception of that season  
 in Great Britain has clung to me ever  
 since.

But live and learn. Here am I, in the fog-  
 giest and dreariest possible manifestation of



those four ill-omened weeks, as lively and joyous as a bird in Spring.

Is there such a thing, I wonder, as a fever of happiness? If so—I fancy I have it. The entirety of my delight positively makes me tremble at times, as when the shivering stage of a febrile malady alternates with the burning one.

My cheeks flush, my nerves thrill, my eyes sparkle! When I awake in the morning, it is ecstasy to know I shall meet Horace at breakfast. He declares I grow more fascinating every hour, says it in a half-bantering way which is the thinnest possible veil over the love that shines in his eyes. Mrs. Frazer insists I am fey.

I cannot settle steadily to anything, but am conscious of being charming as I never was before.

How do I know? Because I know. Can a woman ever give a better reason for anything? Isn't it the Asses' Bridge, whereon she

triumphantly surmounts difficulties that pose mere masculine brains ?

Whatever the terrible disclosure was those people scared Horace with that night, it is evidently sponged out.

Of course it was nothing about himself, and it just shows how sympathetic he is, taking the calamities of others so much to heart.

I think something distressed him at the beginning of last week, for when he came down one morning, his eyes had red rims as if he had not slept, he begged off from a promenade in the New Winter-Garden we were to have gone to, went out directly after breakfast, did not return till five, pretended all the evening to be engrossed in a book, to avoid being spoken to, and started every time the bell rang.

When at nine o'clock the post brought a letter, his hand shook so, he could scarcely lift it off the tray, he grew deadly pale, laid

his head back on the chair, closed his eyes, his lips quivering, or else moving in prayer.

Had Mrs. Frazer not been there, I should have rushed over to him.

By a strong effort he forced himself to sit up, set his teeth in his under lip, tore open the envelope, glanced over the contents, seized me in his arms, kissed me hurriedly, and fled from the room.

It all passed in a few seconds ; Mrs. Frazer dozing the while, peacefully on her sofa, with only the length of the rug betwixt us.

Half an hour later, when she and I were at work, he came back, calmly jubilant. I am naturally curious, but perfect love means entire trust. His face had regained its suffused adorableness, and my heavens were again cloudless. If he wished me to know what it was that agitated him, he would have told me. Amen and Amen !

If I live to be a hundred, I shall never for-

get how he played and sang, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," that night, as if pouring out his very soul in thankfulness.

Mr. Beatoun is here this evening, although there is a vile drizzle, and the east wind is blowing needles and pins.

He has been rather a stranger of late, but at this time of year there is a good deal of quiet visiting to which he gets invited, though where his gloves and cabs come from, passes my comprehension.

I like him ever so much better since I ceased to care whether he admired me or not, for I gave up all idea of ever fooling him or anybody else again, on that unforgettable night, when those horrid people frightened Horace. The Morrisons left yesterday. I cannot make out whether or not there is anything between Pat and one of the girls, but he is invited for Christmas to Heatherton. Horace and I have also promised to go conditionally.

How queer men are ! When that odious old cat, Lady Spittleton, was calling to-day, she mentioned that it is currently reported, Mr. Beatoun is on the eve of marriage with a wealthy widow, old enough to be his mother, and has bargained for all the money being settled upon himself.

At this moment, he is sitting comfortably, with one leg over the other, stirring the tea I have just helped him to, and by way of pleasantly cutting short comments on the weather, I inquire when "the happy event" is to come off, and why he has been so close about it ?

Good gracious ! what is there in a piece of silly gossip to make the man fly up like an enraged turkey-cock, he who is generally so cool and imperturbable ?

I stand on the hearth-rug, thunderstruck at the effect of my chance shot.

"That detestable old woman," he exclaims,

"is 'Devil's Advocate' for Great Britain, I believe; she fabricates every word of the scandals she sets a-going! Nobody is safe within a thousand miles of her tongue. I'm astonished some of her victims don't have her up for defamation of character."

"Wish they would," says Horace, "be *cases* for you, old fellow."

A hurt expression ousts the angry one from Pat's face, and it flashes on us that we are cruel, as well as coarse, to the proud, briefless barrister. Horace sees it first, steps across, lays his hand on his shoulder, gazes down into his eyes, with a look of affection there's no mistaking the sincerity of.

"Dear old Pat," he says, "you know I am a heedless ass. Can't you stand a joke, man?"

"She's an odious old liar all the same," answers the other, quite mollified, and thereupon we all begin pulling poor Lady Spittle-

ton to pieces, smoking the pipe of peace over her sins, in order to ignore our own little tiff, just as an ill-suited pair ring for Baby after dinner to keep up the appearance of conversation before the servants, by talking "goo-goo."

However, I privately doubt if Lady Spittleton's gossip was pure slander after all. When I come to think of it, Pat's bluster was not a denial of the imputation. The rich widow has refused him, that's what it is! With his future possibilities of achieving a name, and his present poverty and pride, how it must have galled him, poor fellow!

After Lady Spittleton left this morning, Mrs. Frazer and I got talking about Horace's birthday, which occurs on the 23rd of next month.

"Can you keep a secret?" said I, smiling.

"Yes, I hope so."

"Well, I am going to make him a present

of a sapphire ring. I got the size by taking a loan of the blood-stone one, that lies in your tray, you said it was his."

Her face flushed, poor dear ; and, really, I entirely sympathize with what I am sure must be her feelings.

She is not the selfish sort of mother, to keep that idiotic old saw, "My son is my son till he gets a wife," always hanging *in terrorem* over her, but Horace is her all, and to resign even a share of his heart in favour of anybody, is trying.

I suppose it is quite understood among us, that he is only waiting till his ordination, to propose, but I daresay, with my 395*l.* a year, I am as feasible a daughter-in-law as she is likely to get, and if he didn't marry me, he would somebody else.

Still I can put myself in her place, and if only she would broach<sup>d</sup> the subject, could set her mind at rest, because for poor papa's



sake, if for no other reason, I should try to be a true daughter to her.

“A sapphire ring, my child?” she asks.

“Yes, you never saw such a beauty! the stone is as large as a sixpence, with a tiny cross of diamonds indented into it. He will look quite a ‘swell’ flourishing it in the pulpit.”

“Of course, dear, Horace would, as you know, value the smallest gift from you, but you really should not squander your money so lavishly. As your guardian, he is legally bound to look after your disbursements till you come of age, so we must not let your kind heart pick your pocket. Now, my child, I know it is impolite to look a gift-horse in the mouth, but just tell me (there’s a dear! I shall not repeat it) how much did you give for the ring?”

“200l. Now, don’t look as if you thought me a reprobate, but be thankful it is no

worse ; if the jeweller had asked double the sum, I should have said, Yes. When I went into the shop, I did not intend giving more than fifty or sixty or so, but he showed me this sapphire, as a curiosity of beauty, and after it, the others looked frights. It is being set, in a peculiar fashion, like one a Russian prince used to wear on his forefinger at Homburg. The loveliest thing you ever beheld ! I broke the tenth commandment every time I sat opposite that man at table ; if he had remained another week, I should, to a certainty, have had sapphires on the brain, and gone in for kleptomania, but you are not really annoyed, are you ?”

“Annoyed, my dearest, who could help loving you, even if you are, at times, a ‘wee bit’ rash ?”

## CHAPTER IX.

## PERFECT.

ORTHODOX weather for the 20th of December, in this part of the world—red nose-points ; frozen water-pipes ; policemen collaring urchins for polishing slides on pavements.

Mrs. Morrison wrote ten days ago, begging my cousin and I would extend our visit to a fortnight, as there are some local annual customs (supposedly réchauffés of Druidical observances), she thinks I should like to see.

“My Cousin ” is Mr. Frazer. Most people call him so, and in fact we are related in the third degree, but our family tree is evidently

not a branching olive, for neither my hostess, her son, nor I, have kith or kin left, except each other.

Mrs. Morrison's programme, although good in its way, does not suit us, so we draw out another.

In the first place, it would be barbarous to leave Mrs. Frazer nearly a fortnight alone at this season, with her sorrowful memories, and indeed, on that plea, I wanted to give up the visit altogether, but she would not hear of such a thing.

In the second place, Horace could not afford to be more than five days absent, as he is hard at work, writing a stock of sermons to begin preaching with, in February. So it is settled that I shall travel to Heatherton, on the 24th, under the charge of Captain and Mrs. Murray, cousins of the Morrisons, whose regiment is stationed in Edinburgh Castle.

Horace and Mr. Beatoun are to follow on the 29th, and we all three return together on the 2nd of January. I cannot imagine why Pat curtails *his* visit. If he is after one of the Morrison girls, a fortnight would not be too long for courting, considering how slight his present acquaintance is with them. Needs *must*, when the devil *drives*, but with the Advocate's brains, it really seems almost sacrilegious to let himself go so cheap, although 10,000*l.* are no doubt 10,000*l.*, even with the drawback of a red-headed wife.

Of course, as a rule, mercenary marriages are abominable, but I suspect, what the Kentucky Minister said to his congregation about slavery, is the gauge society applies to them,—

“Brethren, slavery is wrong in the abstract, but cannot be helped in *fact*.”

Thank goodness, Horace and I are drawn together by pure affection ; my all-perfect Horace, who would rather starve to death than marry for cake and pudding.

## CHAPTER X.

## NEWS.

“For everye white will have its black,  
And everye sweete its sowre.”

PERCY RELIQUES.

PERHAPS I ought not to have “blabbed,” says Mrs. Murray, with that heartless, rippling little laugh of hers, “but I don’t suppose it matters much; both the intended sons-in-law are to be at Heatherton, so you’re sure to hear all about it.”

“Your news absolutely takes away my breath,” I reply, smiling.

“Yes, I thought you would be surprised. Being relatives, we were duly informed; but it is all so unexpected, that, as yet, I do not imagine any one else is.”

She has called about our journey to Heatherton, the day after to-morrow; to say herself and husband will be at the door for me at six a.m.

“I trust we shall have decent weather; be sure you take plenty of wraps; you are not used to Scotch winters (don’t forget your furs).”

“I have a travelling cloak lined with sable, will that do?”

“The very thing—I can’t think what tempts trains to start before day-light in midwinter, but we must make the best of it. Dear me! (looking at her watch) I declare it is three o’clock! I must say good-bye. We dine this evening at the Commander-in-chief’s, and Duncan wants clean gloves. When you marry, my dear, be sure to choose a man who can look after his own small wares. Mine is perfectly helpless. See, I have left our cards for Mrs. Frazer and your cousin—once more, good-bye.



Don't forget. Sharp six, military time. Ta ta."

No wonder I was confounded when she told me that the two eldest Miss Morrisons are engaged to a couple of Indian Civil Service men, home on sick leave, and that the youngest is reported, as not unlikely to become her own parish minister's helpmate. It is the Service papa belonged to, and I feel quite interested in the two "fiancés," which is more than I do in their brides.

But such a pity it is for Pat! I wonder whether it would not be friendly to give him a hint, not to make advances. Two refusals within six weeks, would be gall and wormwood to his proud spirit; and that the rich widow said, "Nâ," and "wi' a laigh curtsey turned awâ," I am as sure as of my own identity.

It says a good deal for him, not to go about maligning her—being refused, generally

makes men so spiteful! Shall I ever forget that little wretch Popinet, whom I said No to at Schlangenbad? How he raved around like a lunatic, telling everybody that I had met him for nine consecutive evenings in the rose-garden behind the hotel, just as if people were bound to marry sous-lieutenants of artillery, because they strolled under the stars among the roses with them!

It was providential poor papa happened to be a whole week in bed, with a raging fit of gout! If the story had come to his ears, I believe he would first have boxed mine, and then sent me off to a convent.

As his mother truly remarked in the only letter I ever had from her, Horace is quite different from the generality of young men, a veritable Chevalier Bayard, "Sans peur et sans reproche." Surely gratitude to God, for possessing the love of such a hero must in time make me more worthy of the blessing.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

MY HOPE WAS WRITTEN ON THE SAND.

“ If hope hath fled away,  
In a year or in a day,  
Is it therefore the less gone ? ”

“ PLEASE ’m here’s your warm water and the clock has just struck eight.”

“ What kind of weather is it, Mary ? ” I ask, yawning myself awake.

“ Most beautiful, ma’am, hard frost ! the milkman says we are going to have a long tack of it.”

It is Horace’s birthday.

Last night I left orders with the table-maid to place a certain little packet beside

his plate at breakfast, and am all eagerness to see how he looks on opening it, yet five minutes after the gong has done sounding, I still linger over my toilet.

The truth is that what Mrs. Frazer said about the ring being too handsome for me to give, and my guardian to receive, in the circumstances, has worried me privately, and now at the last minute, I have suddenly taken it into my head, that perhaps it looks rather like a hint to declare himself. I wish with all my heart I had made him a smoking-cap instead, but what is done, cannot be undone.

Stepping down stairs, I feel more nervous than I ever did in my life, but "Come, Roberta," say I to myself, "don't be a fool! What are you shaking at? Does not *he* know perfectly that *you* know he intends to pop the question whenever he gets a church, and not an hour sooner, and besides, if you gave him fifty rings, common sense might tell you

he would never propose, with his parent staring and listening in cold blood, at the other end of the table."

I enter the dining-room, which looks quite festal, with holly fixed up here, there, and everywhere, round the picture-frames, upon the chandelier, great bushy heaps of it in two large bronze vases on the mantel-piece, the scarlet berries glowing bravely in a narrow slant of brilliant morning sunshine.

At the table-head sits Mrs. Frazer, a pleased smile on her face, in her hand an antique embossed silver coffee-pot, from which she is filling our cups, and which has been a hundred and fifty years in the family.

Opposite her, with his back to the door, is my guardian, a small packet open before him, my gift on his finger.

Such a goose I was, to go shaking and quaking, for fear he should suppose this and fancy that.

He rises, as radiant as a saint in a cathedral window, embraces me affectionately, and with an accent on the first word, and oh! such a look into my eyes, says,—

“*You* know what I feel.”

Well, it is to be hoped I do, but as we sit chatting blithely over our coffee, and fried haddocks, and oat-cakes, and marmalade, my own sensations are like drinking sparkling hock, in an atmosphere of white lilies, to the music of the Guards' waltz.

At ten Horace goes to college, and having to start so early to-morrow, I am all the forenoon in my own room, packing—a job I always prefer doing for myself.

While transferring gowns, jackets, sashes, &c., from the bed where I have spread them, to the trunks they are to travel in, I keep humming snatches of song, too excited to go right through with any, but just trilling a line here and a refrain there, as they

bubble up, from the joy-spring within me.

Presently Mrs. Frazer comes in, with a highly-ornamented fancy box in her hand, and begs my acceptance of it *to-day*, as I shall be gone on Christmas.

“I hope you may like it, my dear,” she says. “The weather has prevented me from shopping, so I had to depute Horace—it is *his* choice. I think it very nice myself, and wish you health and happiness to wear it.”

Returning her embrace, I open the box and lift out exactly what I have forgotten to provide myself with—the sweetest imaginable article in mourning fans—an artistically tasteful combination of ebony, crape, marabouts, and black spangles—most ornamental in itself—but, as Horace’s selection, a thing to be treasured till our heads are grey, and we look at it through spectacles, with a smile and a sigh for the days that are fled.

After lunch, as my guardian has not returned, and my travelling preparations are complete, I recollect that some worsted-work-patterns the Morrisons commissioned me to procure, have not been sent home, so I kill two birds with one stone, by going to see after them, and taking a breath of refreshing air after my labours.

The day is so pleasantly bracing, that I am tempted to a second stroll along Princes Street, where "all the world and his wife" appear to be exercising.

On my way home, I meet Mr. Beatoun, who turns with me.

The sinking sun is nearly level in our faces. A brass band is playing delightfully. For just a moment, the fortune-hunter at my side is again the "strange Englishman" whom I once, for a whole afternoon and evening, pictured as probably my destined husband.

The blessed *now* of my life soon dis-



sipates these hallucinations, however, and I feel towards poor Pat like a rosy cosy child to a Robin red-breast on a bitter snowy morning.

Contempt for him, because he needs crumbs? Not at all!

It being Horace's birthday, the advocate dines with us, giving the hostess his arm down stairs.

Horace takes me.

His good looks strike me anew—perhaps because the white tie he wears for the first time becomes him.

“He shall always wear white ones when we are married,” is what I am thinking while he says grace.

How amazed he would be, if he could read my thoughts! but, for that matter, how would any company look if the “magic flute” began playing in their midst?

I can hardly eat my dinner for glancing

at the transparent blueness of the sapphire, gleaming on his hand as he carves.

Pat's eyes tend in that direction too, but he makes no remark.

With dessert, a pretty birthday-cake is put on the table, surrounded by four and twenty little lighted tapers, one for each year of Horace's life.

"He is rather old for such 'goodies' now," says his mother, smiling at him fondly; "but we began the custom when he was quite a little fellow, and have continued it ever since."

Working vigorously with my new black-spangled fan, I do some mental arithmetic, while my guardian peels an orange for me.

"Suppose I should inaugurate a similar institution on my own account, by the time my husband, the Reverend Mr. Frazer, is sixty-five, and his wife sixty, how many tapers should we require annually, for memorial-cake purposes?"

"If it be a fair question, what are you smiling at?" he asks, handing me the orange artistically divided into cloves.

"Never you mind," I reply, regardless of grammar, as, with a saucy little toss of my head, I lift my eyes to his in a peculiar way that from experience I know is bewitching.

Many and many a time have I tried, and never found it miss fire, except in the instance of Mr. Beatoun. The fervid glance I shot at *him* up the table at Nieder Baden was simply wasted powder.

We pass a delightful evening.

Horace and his friend seem comfort personified, lounging in easy chairs, each nursing a foot or a knee.

"Do somebody look how the weather is," says Mrs. Frazer, in reference to my journey to-morrow.

The young men make a simultaneous move, but, laughing, I spring to the window, and,

nothing loth, they subside into their former attitudes—Horace shrugging his shoulders playfully, as with a sly glance at me he exclaims,—

“Place aux Dames !”

I draw up the blind.

The night is splendid, viewed from a snug room—keen frost, stars like diamonds—moonlight, a blaze of silver sunshine.

We all fall silent for a few minutes, then my guardian goes to the harmonium and sings softly, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”

Pat leans back in his chair, and shuts his eyes to listen. I remain at the window, gazing at the glittering stars, that look like living gem-flowers in the azure fields above.

“Come near the fire, my dear,” cries Mrs. Frazer; “you will catch cold over there.”

At her voice I return to earth with the

sense of loss one feels, when the rosy glory of the Alpine *after-glow* dies out.

"I had no idea it was so late," says Pat, looking at his watch. "I wish you a very good journey, Miss Gathorne. Frazer and I will be with you on Tuesday."

"I think I shall walk a short way with you, old fellow, to smoke my cigar," says Horace. "The 'mater' hates the smell of tobacco, don't you, mamma?"

"Yes, so off with you, my dear, but don't be long; you know Roberta leaves at six."

"I shall not be more than ten minutes."

Pat proceeds down stairs. Horace lingers on the landing, and playfully offers me his cigar, which, with a low curtsey, I as playfully decline. He seizes my hand.

"I wish you were not going, Roberta," he says; "neither to-morrow nor ever. I—"

"Horace! are you coming or not?" cries Pat from below.

“ All right ! ”

“ Make haste back, my son,” says Mrs. Frazer, appearing at the door ; “ you will give this child her death of cold, keeping her here in a draught ! ”

The blind is still up. From the window I watch the two friends along the street, their firm steps ringing sharply on the frosty pavement, the tips of their cigars looking like particularly steady fire-flies.

“ Now, darling,” says the old lady, “ we must be off to bed. You have to be up at five, and, with so long a journey in prospect, will need all the sleep there’s time for.”

At the door of her room she embraces me fondly, saying how much she shall miss me, and bids me remember late hours are bad for my *roses*.

In my own chamber, I suddenly recollect a small parcel I left on the hall table.

As two of the servants are on my

account to rise at half-past four, they have all taken the opportunity of retiring earlier than usual.

The lobby gas is turned down to a point, but I have a small hand-lamp.

The table where my parcel lies is close to the street door. As I reach it, the bell rings, and, not to keep Horace waiting in the cold, I open at once.

In the silent, white, moonshine stands a common-looking young woman, in a fusty-smelling Rob Roy tartan shawl, and a straw hat flauntily decked with red roses.

"Is my husband in?" she demands rather than inquires.

"Whom?" I ask, supposing she has mistaken the door.

"My husband, Horace Frazer; who else would it be? It is a disgrace to keep his lawful wife out o' her ain house because, forsooth, his mother's pride would na', may

be, like onybody except a born lady for a daughter-in-law. But my mind is made up; *here* I mean to stay, and no be keepit out o' my ain house a day longer. Where should a wife live but wi' her ain man? If onybody has to tramp, it shall be my mother-in-law, for as grand as she thinks hersel'. It's God's truth I'm tellin' you. Horace and me has been man and wife this month past!"

To save my life I could not utter a sound. My heart feels ice, my tongue paralyzed, my temples hammer like steam-engines.

There is a frightful surging hiss in my ears, but through it all I hear steps approaching—Horace's firm elastic tread. He is humming his favourite "Douglas, Douglas," which, softly as he "croons" it, reiterates from head to heel of me, as if I had suddenly become "a microphone."

Oh, if only I could get up stairs! but my



feet refuse to stir. All I can do is to shrink behind the door, where it flashes on me that the woman is Widow Burridge's daughter, whom I spoke to, the day she brought Horace a message from her mother.

My little lamp is on the inner hall table, so the outer lobby must look dark from the street. The woman and I saw each other distinctly by the light of the moon.

Horace, still humming softly, reaches the steps—the door is ajar, the stars shimmering in the glorious, silent night.

“Horace!” cries the woman familiarly, “is this you? What's kept ye? I've been waitin' this quarter of an hour and more!”

“Why did you come here?” he stammers.

“Here? and where else, pray, should a man's awful wife be but beside her ain husband?”

“Come this way with me,” he entreats, and, side by side, away they walk along the empty street, not even shutting the door.

---

Loud billows seem thundering and lashing inside my head, yet my hearing is sharp to agony.

The sound of their tread grows fainter, till they turn the corner, and then for the first time I try to move.

The force I have to exert upon my limbs is like struggling with a strong wild beast.

I shut the door without locking it, in case Horace has not his latch-key. Woe is me! through all my agony of shame for his baseness, how I love him still!

Leaving my little lamp on the table, I crawl up stairs—literally crawl—for only on my knees and hands can I ascend. Slowly, painfully, wearily, solemnly, feeling like my own funeral procession, convinced a merciful God has stricken me with paralysis, and is about to remove me out of this terrible world.

Arrived in my bed-room, I manage to lock the door, and, for fear of disturbing Mrs.


Frazer, with the hysterical shrieks which battle for utterance, bite my under-lip till pain compels me to let go, with my mouth half full of blood. Not on the outside of my soft red lip do I inflict the wound, but on the inside, where it will not show when I go down to breakfast with—— God pity me!

Suddenly, the rigidity of my limbs gives way, I feel lithe and strong enough to rush round the world, the blood sounds in the back of my head like a raging tempest.

I dash at the window, and fling it up. The moonshine on the rows of house-tops makes them look like sea-waves.

Panting, bathed in perspiration, I stand one foot on the table, the other on the window-ledge!

The rushing in my head stops with a jerk, and is followed by a heavy, sleepy, sensation in my brow and eyes that woos me to rest. How peaceful the waters, that *once* were house-tops look, with the moonbeams kissing them



One leap—only *one*—and quiet for ever more!

I cannot pray, but, alas! if I could, it would be for yon woman's husband.

A despairing sort of wish flashes through me, that I were religious enough, to *loathe* instead of *adoring* him.

“Farewell to all eternity, my own dear, dear Horace!” I whisper aloud, with my hands stretched up to the moon, beaming full in my face.

I poise on one foot—next moment I shall be gone!

The Christmas waits in the street strike up, that to me, most plaintive of airs,—

“Vous qui pleurez,  
Venez à ce Dieu, car Il console.”

Shivering, gulping down a great sob, I descend, feeling all at once, so helpless! so helpless!

I pity my poor forlorn young self, as if

I were a spectator, looking in, on my own heart.

Oh! if I had anybody's shoulder to lay my weary head on; anybody who cared in the very least about me!

To be alone—so *terribly* alone—is the very blackness of darkness!

I wish I could *abhor* Horace!—it would help me—but alas! wishing isn't doing, and if I followed *impulse*, I should rush away to *him* this minute with my grief! I think *he* would pity me! His conduct is a hideous mystery—*cruelly* mysterious! but I am sure he *did* care for me a *little*, although it was an insult to do so."

And then a vision of my dear lost hopes rises before me like the beautiful portrait of a dead *Beloved*.

I fling myself upon my knees, my face on the bed, my hands clasped over my eyes!

Tears! tears! tears!

## CHAPTER XII.

## DRIVEN FROM PARADISE.

“ We met, hand to hand,  
We clasped hands close and fast—  
As close as oak and ivy stand :  
But it is past.

“ We loosed hand from hand ;  
We parted face from face :  
Each went his way . . . .”

THE housemaid who is making my fire drops the shovel with a clash.

I ooze out of sleep. “ Ooze ” is the only word I can think of which expresses the gradual awakening of my faculties to a vague impression that something terrible has happened.

“There, I think you’ll do now,” she says, addressing the grate, and getting off her knees.

“Mary !”

“Yes, miss, I didn’t know you was awake. I was just going to call you. It has struck four, ma’am. Where will you take breakfast ? Missis rang, a little ago, to say it would perhaps be comfortablest for you to have it here, as it is so awful cold ; it’ll be warmer than the dining-room ; but that’s as you please, miss.”

As I please ! Just as if pleasure and I had not said good-bye for evermore !

At ten o’clock last night I looked forward to a *tête-à-tête* breakfast with Horace as almost too much happiness ; now, rather than be three minutes in the room with him, I would hang myself without thinking twice about it.

Indeed, it is lucky I have no poison at

hand—the temptation might be more than I could withstand.

Such an odious mistake existence is—a detestable slough, through which fate drives us helplessly to perdition.

Why, in the name of wonder, were circumstances so ordered that I was obliged to telegraph for Colonel Frazer? Why could I not help losing my heart the instant I set eyes upon Horace? Why was I brought to Edinburgh? Oh, papa, papa! if only you had not died!

Sitting up in bed, I stretch out my arms towards the far-away grave where he lies. It seems too frightful to breast the storm of life without a human being to care whether I sink or swim.

Falling back on the pillows, I whimper for compassion of myself, as a child with a cut finger does at the sight of its own blood.

A clattering of cups and saucers behind



the door, and enter Mary with my breakfast.

“Mercy me, miss !” she cries, “it’s past five ; you’ll never be in time. Mr. Frazer has been up since dear knows when ! I set his shaving-water at his door when I came up to mend your fire, and he had his boots on. I heard him walking up and down. Hadn’t you better be drinking your coffee, ma’am ? it will get cold.”

She puts my dressing-jacket and a shawl over my shoulders, and sets the tray on the bed, saying,—

“Please is there anything I can carry down now, miss, to save time afterwards ?”

“Yes, take that, and that,” I answer, pointing to a leather case and a bundle of wraps in a strap, anxious to get rid of her, and be alone, to arrange my cloak in jaunty folds, over the fox that is gnawing my

quivering flesh and bones and nerves and muscles with such cruelly-sharp teeth.

I pour out a cup of coffee, with plenty of rich cream, and drink it right off, then another to wash down a bit of crisp bacon and an egg.

Had female M.D.'s been invented in that wretched King Saul's time? Was the witch of Endor one? At any rate, in prescribing bodily nourishment for a wounded spirit, she did the right thing for her royal patient.

As the French say, appetite comes in eating. I contrive to make a tolerable meal, and by degrees grow dolefully resigned, to endure the burden of continued existence.

"Mercy on me, miss!" cries Mary, flouncing in in a fuss, "you'll never be ready now; it's full twenty minutes past five!"

"Good gracious! Well, never mind; take away the tray; I shall manage yet."

She goes. I screw myself up to face the

immediate foreground of my life, as to the future ; but no, I dare not think of it.

At all times a quick dresser, I go at it with a will, and save my distance by ten minutes, to the voluble admiration of the maid, who finds me equipped on her return.

“Oh, how nice you do look in that hat, ma’am !” she cries ; “it is most awful ‘setting.’”

With a ghastly caricature of a smile, I say I am glad she is pleased. Even in my high-horsiest moods, I never go in for treating servants like old shoes ; but now, when the prospect of meeting Horace is making my heart thump till it shakes my ankles, I could say, “Thank you kindly, sir,” to a sweep for holding his soot-bag aside, not to smirch my dress in passing.

I look in the glass and mentally curse my youth and health. What use are they but to make me strong to suffer ? To look at

me, who could believe my heart is broken ? I arrange my short veil, finically particular about the *set* of it, even in this supreme moment. I always was neat in my dress, and custom is second nature. I do not believe I could lie still in my coffin if my shroud were awry. Ugh ! what puts coffins in my head ? I hate to think of them, yet would far rather drop down dead here where I stand than encounter Horace.

“ Oh, my darling, my own dear darling ! how could you do it ? ”

As in a night-mare, I hear the door-bell ring and the cabman coming up for my boxes. I pour Eau de Cologne on my jacket, and soak my handkerchief with it. Perhaps I am insane ? but the fusty smell of Horace's wife's shawl has never left me since last night. I can't get away from it, although I have used a whole three and sixpenny bottle of scent this morning already. Ugh, ugh ! and how

fastidious he used to be ! It was one of the things I admired him for. *Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !* she smokes a clay pipe, I shouldn't wonder."

While the servant and cabman are carrying away my things, a tight cord seems suddenly to stretch itself betwixt my throat and the roots of my under teeth, followed by a sensation of nausea. But it will not do to give way, I must "brave up" somehow ; so, filling a tumbler with water, I empty nearly half a wine-glass of Eau de Cologne into it, gulp it off, and rush like a tornado to Mrs. Frazer's bed-side to say farewell—a farewell she, poor dear, fancies is only for a week, but which I mean to be final, though where in all the wide world to seek another home I know not.

Eve driven from Paradise is what I feel like, only, as there's no Adam with me, my case is infinitely more deplorable than hers.

"I trust you will enjoy yourself, my darling," says the old lady. "Horace will be at Heatherton on Tuesday to fetch you. Remember me to the Morrisons. God bless you, dear!"

I burst into tears, and give her a great hug, but literally cannot articulate "Adieu," for the cord betwixt my throat and under-jaw seems to paralyze my tongue.

I rush down stairs; the lobby lamp is burning, so are the street ones. I notice them through the open door, as one does the merest trifles at a moment of crisis.

My guardian is out at the cab, speaking to Mrs. Murray, while the captain gives some directions to the driver. Her cheerful laugh rasps me.

"Ah! here you come at last!" she cries, catching sight of me in the lobby; "better late than never."

Horace hurries in, with a face like death.

Pretending not to notice his offered arm, I rush out. He follows, and assists me into the cab. Mrs. Murray chatters, her husband ditto.

“Farewell!” says Horace, giving my hand a convulsive grip, which, for the life of me, I cannot help returning.

Off we drive.

Till the breath leaves my body, Horace Frazer will haunt me, as he stood there, bare-headed in the lamp-light, that chill dark morning, as grief-stricken a man, to look at, as ever cried, “God pity me!”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## WITCHES' PRAYERS.

“ Oh ! who knows the truth,  
How she perished in her youth ? ”

“ Was it through stress of weather,  
Quicksands, rocks, or all together ? ”

“ THE late Miss Gathorne,” says Mrs. Murray, nodding to me, with her glass at her eye, as I enter the breakfast-room at Heatherton, the morning after my arrival. I am ever so much behind time, but it is none of that satirical woman’s business. I took a mortal dislike to her during our journey yesterday. She is clever, heartless and henpecks the captain, because he has not pluck to show fight.



"Come away, my dear," cries my hostess from the top of her well-filled table. "A merry Christmas! See, I have kept a place for you here!"

Provoked at being so late, I make my way past a row of human backs, up the long, narrow, old-fashioned room, with its seven lancetted slits of windows all in a row, and slink into the indicated chair—I and my heavy heart.

There are twenty or thirty of a party, eating, drinking, and getting up a perfect tornado of laughter every few minutes. The three "house-daughters" bow "good morning" from their several localities. Mr. Morrison, from his end of the table, offers me the compliments of the season in tones like a "view halloo," to make them heard above the mirthful din.

Several men, who arrived too late last night for making acquaintance with, take

polite stock of me, with their jaws going, and one of the intended sons-in-law, who squints, appears to be staring me out, but is, in fact, looking at his uncle in the opposite direction.

Mrs. Morrison helps me to all sorts of good food, and hopes I have brought a sharp appetite to the Highlands, as she "likes to see young people relish their meals."

Enjoy eating! To avoid being pestered, I gulp up a mouthful of coffee, and fiddle-faddle with some game pie, but am so racked with anxiety about where to go to at the end of my short visit, that nectar itself would taste no better than the wine of Suresnes, which it takes three to drink—one to hold the victim, while the other forces it over his throat.

I am sorry I came to Heatherton; the cheerfulness of it will drive me crazed, I think; and goodness only knows how long I

can keep up the farce of seeming heart-whole like the people round me.

Poor Job, when his slippery friends "rated" him till he cursed the day of his birth, could not feel more forlorn than I do; this Christmas morning I expected to enjoy so much.

I shall never return to Edinburgh, but my brain aches with considering how to avoid it, since Horace is to be here on Tuesday expressly to escort me back. How can I endure to meet him?

"You are eating nothing, my dear," says Mrs. Morrison, rupturing my ruminations; "I'm afraid your journey has knocked you up."

"You should lie down for an hour or two," purs a soft, pussy-cat-looking old lady on my other side; "I generally feel half dead myself after travelling from Edinburgh."

The squinting son-in-law-elect's eye seems

to skewer me; his bride stares as if I were a natural curiosity.

If they keep bothering about my looks and "fatiguedness," I shall go off in hysterics to a certainty; and in all conscience I am wretched enough already, without getting up a scene, to be retailed with additions for Horace's benefit.

Try for composure as I will, however, I feel the tears coming, and in desperation dart up a petition, like a rocket from a ship in distress. Decidedly a vague prayer, leaving Heaven *carte blanche* as to the answer, not particularly sure myself, indeed, what sort of help it is I desiderate.

Suddenly "my father's grave" is injected into my brain.

Thank God! Even under the turf my father is *mine*—somebody belonging to *me*. The spot where he lies is the one point in creation to which I am in a manner linked.

I no longer feel so terribly like Campbell's "Last Man." The uncertainty which has been teasing my mental tissues vanishes.

Swift as lightning, my course maps itself clearly. I shall contrive some excuse for remaining here a couple of days after Horace, and, instead of proceeding to Edinburgh, start direct for Baden-en-Suisse. At this season the hotel is safe to be empty, and old Brünner and his *frau* will be only too glad to have me. Afterwards, should life prove unendurable, there's always a pan of charcoal as a last resource.

Indecision was torture, but now, having sketched my future, I can fling myself feverishly, thirstily, into the present, staving off thoughts of the morrow, as prisoners in the Reign of Terror danced, sang, and coquetted while waiting their turn at the guillotine.

"You are looking ever so much better," remarks Mrs. Morrison, as we rise from

table; "the colour has quite come back to your cheeks. I am so glad. You will be able perhaps to join the skating party; the pond is no distance off. Do you skate?"

"I delight in it. A good run on the ice is what I should enjoy of all things this lovely bright morning."

"Don't wear yourself out, though. Bella can supply you with skates; she has three pairs, and you are nearly of a size, I think. Oh! here come the letters at last; they are unusually late."

The bag is handed to Mr. Morrison, who is still at table, as are several of his guests.

Like Fate, with a red face and spectacles, he distributes the despatches and news papers.

I do not expect anything, but my heart beats fourteen to the dozen till the last billet is given out, and then a dull sense of disappointment comes over me.

The only letter I ever had was Mrs. Frazer's at Niêder-Baden, but I have often been interested watching how other people looked, on receipt of theirs.

There is a sort of continuous undertone-dirge for my lost Horace moaning through me, and, to deaden the depressing wail of it, I set myself to note the effect of their correspondents' communications, upon my fellow-guests.

"Ho! ho!" The gimlet-eyed future son-in-law grows as red as a turkey-cock, on receipt of a pink envelope, which, while his *fiancée* playfully twits him with, he thrusts unread into his pocket.

I also chuckle to observe Mrs. Murray turn pale, when the captain stretches across his hand for the contents of a blue-white business-looking envelope she has just received, which looks uncommonly like a milliner's bill.

Goodness gracious! has an evil spirit got into me? Except by a few foreigners I refused to marry, I have always been considered a warm-hearted little mortal; and if providential scarifications soften the heart, as whacking it with a rolling-pin does beef, I'm sure mine ought to be tender enough.

To find myself, therefore, rejoicing over the dents in my neighbours' armour is not satisfactory, and, after all, who can tell who is right and who wrong in any affair? Doesn't life groan with that question? although, alas! Charity herself could not give Horace the benefit of a doubt. Didn't I see the woman? didn't I hear her? didn't I almost grow sick with the smell of her disgusting shawl?

Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* keep me from thinking about him for only a few days!

Gathering up their newspapers and letters,



the party gradually disperses, the men to smoke and *do* the stables, the women to dawdle for half an hour, by which time the ice will be swept, and in trim, to be used as a circus, for young men and maidens showing off on.

It is all very well for people with easy minds to dawdle. At present, unless I turn on the steam, and keep it up, I shall become insane.

I rush to my room to put on my war-paint, which, with me, neither means rouge, nor pearl-white, nor pencilled eye-brows, nor *noir-velouté*, although, even were such make-ups in my line, there is nobody here worth using them for.

Indeed, I consider it extremely selfish of Mrs. Morrison to have only old men to meet me, with the exception of those two kilted, hobble-de-hoy MacDonalds.

The prospective sons-in-law don't count,

and are frights if they did—the squinting one especially, who is a sumph.

The other's eyes stand out with fatness, like the sinner's in the Bible, but he looks *up* to a thing or two; so, just to punish his future mamma for not arranging her company better, and—alas!—to keep myself from thinking I shall start a flirtation with him.

Meantime, while dressing, it is a toss-up whether I sing, whistle, or cry myself blind. I try the first. It is bright sunshine outside, and there's no mistake about the place being beautiful.

The grey old mansion stands on a southward slope, finished off by a belt of firs, beyond which is the lake, and mountains, glorious mountains, all around. At the sight of them my eyes grow misty, and the trill of my songlet quavers into a sob, but shaking my head at myself in the glass, I determine to

live for the present moment, like the beasts that perish. I am sure I wish I *were* an ox or a pony ; they never have their hearts wrung by too dear, cruel guardians !

With the tail of my eye I notice the pair of callow MacDonalds, on their way to the scene of action ; so I put on my new scarlet cloth jacket—such a beauty ! I bought it because Horace happened to say one evening that the colour suited me. My black velvet hat, with a tiny plume, has a piquant as well as distinguished effect.

While fastening it on, I sing,—

“ Then what’s the use of sighing,  
Since Time is on the wing ?  
We cannot stop his flying,  
Then merrily, merrily, sing Fal-la ! ”

Voices on the lawn ! “ carillons ” of female laughter, mingled with guffaws of masculine ditto.

The “ March of the Cameron Men,” played

atrociously on the key bugle, which nevertheless has a holiday sound. I peep out to see who is the performer.

It is McStruan of McStruan, a jovial old red-nosed party, who wanted me to dance "The Hulachan" with him last night, and who, mounted on the pediment of the sun-dial, is trumpeting the announcement to all whom it concerns, that Time flies, and the ice waits.

I take a parting look at myself in the glass, which happens to be a good one, and reports me "all right" for laying siege to Miss Etta Morrison's future lord and master. It will opiate the ache of my sorrow, and do him no harm—the reverse rather—for, poor man, how bored he must be with her jog-trot goody-goodness!

Oh! Horace, Horace! you have much to answer for! I meant to turn over quite a new leaf when we married, and visit the

poor, and dole out sixpences and tracts, to all the reprobates I could lay hands on, and be such a model minister's wife ; but now, my good resolves are where last year's snow is, and I feel like the little nigger who, when taken up for stealing a pair of shoes to attend Sabbath-school in, declared, sobbing, "she would nebber try to be good no more."

If I commit suicide at Baden, it is your fault ; if I flirt here, till the women vote me shamefully "fast," and wish I had not come, it will be entirely your doing. You are burnt into my heart like Calais into Queen Bess's, and I shall never love anybody else ; though I loathe myself for not hating the very name of you. How will you feel when you read in the papers, "Suicide of a young lady at Baden-en-Suisse" ? How will you answer for it to God and your mother ? The distress of it will nearly kill her at any rate, poor old dear !

The McStruan trumpet calls still more energetically to the rendezvous. Down stairs I run, conscious of being, by a long chalk, the handsomest woman present.

"Pray allow me to carry these for you," says Mr. Egerton, taking my skates as we walk side by side to the loch.

He belongs to Miss Etta by rights, but is off duty, as she has a cold, and remains indoors with an unbecoming prudence-cap on her head, and a red tip to her little pug nose.

Arrived at the scene of action, he buckles on my skates—I, steadying myself on his shoulder, with his knee for a footstool. Looking up presently, he makes rather a nice remark about my instep, so I lean ever so little heavier, and, half-closing my eyes to show how long and thick the lashes are, look straight down into his, which are by no means bad.

The two MacDonalds are cutting "spread eagles," which in kilts I consider very objectionable, although the fifty or sixty natives assembled seem of a different opinion.

Mr. Egerton and I set off right across the loch, out of the ruck of *figuranti*.

The everlasting hills with their snowy tops, which face us, remind me—I don't know why—of Bunyan's Delectable Mountains.

Mr. Egerton, like most stout men, is a capital skater, and has the sense not to go in for fancy figures, like his future brother-in-law who is skin and bone, and looks as if performing in the "Dance of Death," when he darts along with outstretched arms, and his unfortunate eye glaring in a lateral direction.

My spirits froth briskly, as we glide over the glassy surface, now right ahead and hand in hand, now parting to meet again,

like a pair of scissors, while our remarks on the company are short and crisp—a style of conversation which ripens intimacy very quickly.

When a man laughs at a pretty girl's strictures upon his shortly-to-be nearest relations, and at the same time catches her up, again and again, from make-believe slips on the ice, depend upon it he is near losing his head.

My partner is, at any rate. He has laughed till his whiskers are bedewed with tears, because I called Mrs. Morrison (who is being shoved along in an old chair) “Lady Skewton.”

Possibly, in the Highlands, it is *chic* to skate as if at a funeral, but certainly Mr. Egerton and I are the only lively parties on the ice.

Here comes Mr. Bruce, his future brother-in-law, bearing down on us, probably to



convey a hint that his presence is requested at head-quarters.

“Do let us go for a walk on land,” I suggest, as the possibility strikes me; “that is, if you would not rather remain here. I should like to see something of the country; it is all new to me; you know I am almost a foreigner.”

By his eagerness to unbuckle and be off, I fancy he also guesses Mr. Bruce's errand; so ere that individual's iron-shod feet can bring him to speech of us, we have rounded a sharp turn of the road, and are fairly started mountainwards.

By-and-by, a stiff climb betwixt two rocks brings us out on an immense stretch of moor, where we wander side by side in the pure air.

“Isn't this charming?” says he.

“Very! but suppose Lady Skewton sends to fetch you?”

"Oh, bother Lady Skewton! What day are your friends coming from Edinburgh?"

"Why do you ask?"

Before many minutes are past, I discover that the Morrisons have announced my engagement to Mr. Beatoun, of all unlikely people, and, by the time we have walked half a mile, my companion, in almost plain words, is lamenting that he and I have met *too late*.

I cannot imagine what put Pat into the Morrisons' heads. I'm sure Horace seemed devoted to me when they were in town, but I dare say they wanted him for Miss Annie, and none are so blind as those who don't wish to see.

But I must not think of the past. If I do, I shall begin weeping, which Mr. Egerton will consider a personal compliment to himself, as representing sour grapes.

I shall not tell him whether I am engaged

to Mr. Beatoun or not. That he should suppose it true puts us more upon an equal footing in our present interesting pastime, and enables me in particular to carry it on without the feeling of humiliation I might possibly have experienced.

I suddenly change the subject from matrimony to marigolds, and we wax mutually scientific upon botany, of which one knows about as much as the other.

With a companion to lead him on, he is a pleasant conversationist, but how he will ever manage to pass a whole existence beside Etta Morrison I can't imagine; for, as Lord Burleigh says, "There is nothing so fulsome as a 'shee-foole.'"

While we walk on silently, after a particularly sentimental explosion, the utter stillness of the vast moor acts curiously upon me.

The sensuous frivolities of my sinful soul, appear for the moment to condense into a

thick cloud which rolls aside as I gaze up to the blue above, with, I should fancy, the sort of sensation a brigand experiences, when the vesper bell, falling on his ear, makes him defer cutting his victim's throat till he has told his beads.

I neither imagine I am behaving well, nor try to justify the way I mean to conduct myself for the next week; but am quite reckless, and have a perverse delight in thinking, there's no saying how far I may go to the bad now.

I suppose the miserable old witches, long ago, who were driven half mad with cruelty, felt like this, when they said the Lord's Prayer backward.

*Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !* what else am I doing? And to remember that only last evening I felt so religious and tender when Horace, with his angel-face, sang "Holy, holy, holy," in the dear back drawing-room in Manor Place !

Mr. Egerton and I get back to Heatherton, at the fag-end of lunch, and on entering the dining-room, are saluted by half-a-dozen voices :—

“ Where on earth have you been ? ”

“ We thought you had run away ? Fallen over the crags and broken your necks,” &c., &c., &c.

Miss Etta, blear-eyed and sneezing violently, “ *glowers* ” at her betrothed, who straightway strides to an empty chair beside her, and says something in a low voice, whereat she regards me with a milk-and-water smile of pity, her mouth not being expressive enough for a sneer.

Brought up as I was, I had in a great measure to evolve a creed for myself from my inner consciousness, and probably my notions upon certain subjects would be considered audacious, by persons reared in orthodoxy.

Yet till, with my own eyes, I saw Horace walk off with his wife last night, there was at least a possibility of good in me. Now, I have a fierce joy in feeling myself a sort of Esau in petticoats ; every man's hand against me, and my hand against every man. For me—

“Love smiles no more,  
Hope's light is gone ;  
Pleasures are o'er,  
Sorrows come on.”

From this moment that most Christian motto of the Scottish Royal Arms, shall be my rule of life: “Nemo me impune lacessit.”

When Mr. Egerton and I came in, I had already discovered in him a want of intuitive perception, which convinced me, it would generally require a kick to make him understand when his room was better than his company, and it was my full intention to remit him scatheless to his lawful perch.

But whatever it was he whispered to his bride was evidently to my discredit, so although he is personally a bore, "*None injure me without getting scratched.*" I never was in such a rage in my life, as at Miss Etta's weakly-contemptuous smile!

Lunch being over, we scatter. I am on my way to the library for a book, when Mrs. Morrison asks me to step for a few minutes into a little side room.

I go; but, good gracious! what next?—she favours me with a lecture on what she terms the "misfortune of my foreign upbringing."

"You have no mother, my dear, and I speak to you as I should to my own daughter, out of pure kindness, because your mamma and I were girls together. You have been reared abroad, you see, and conduct which might be thought quite correct there would here be considered very much the reverse, I assure

you. At Rome one must, I suppose, do as the Romans do, but in England nothing tells so much against a young lady as getting talked about."

"But if she be doing nothing wrong, only laughing at the antediluvian crotchets of a pack of old twaddlers?"

"Hush, hush, my dear! you must not talk like that! Eccentricity in a young lady always involves moral obliquity. Of course I do not mean in your case, but, but—believe me, it is safest to keep on the right side."

"Which is the right side, if there be no harm in question?"

"Oh, my dear girl! you really have the strangest ideas! so we shall say no more about them, only you will think over my friendly little hints, won't you? And, by-the-bye, a little bird whispered to me, about a certain legal friend of yours and



mine. Well, well, when he comes, he will set you right, my love, upon those points of etiquette, you would have been acquainted with, if you had been reared in England. Now let us kiss and be friends."

I rush up to my room with burning cheeks, and lock the door in a transport of indignation, which presently dissolves in a stormy fit of weeping.

The horrid double-faced old thing ! Etta is jealous, that's the truth, and Mr. Egerton, who is incapable of what *I* call love, and does not care a button for her, is quaking for her 10,000*l*.

"Kick her well, she's got no friends," does not infer moral obliquity in the *kicker*, I suppose ?

"A certain legal friend of yours and mine" will instruct you in the proprieties ! "Dame !" (it is enough to make one say it in English) to be coolly told that soles have

become upper leathers, and Pat is to teach *me* etiquette forsooth !

“ Oh, my Horace, hollow-hearted ! oh, my Horace, mine no more !

to think you are only a whited sepulchre after all.

I know what I mean to do this Christmas night, when angels are supposed to be gazing down through the starlight, singing, “ Peace on earth and good-will to men.” I shall beguile Miss Etta’s betrothed to the garden-gate, and say “ MY Lord’s Prayer backwards ” by borrowing one of his cigars and smoking it. He is weak enough for anything, and, thanks to the “ moral obliquity of my up-bringing,” I can take my “ weed ” like a German. Won’t Etta be in a rage ? Serve her right.

## CHAPTER XIV.

BREAKING MINE IDOL, I HAVE BRACED MY HEART.

“I deck myself in silks and jewel’ry,  
I plume myself like any mated dove ;  
They praise my rustling show, and never see  
My heart is breaking for a little love.

“Downstairs I laugh, I sport, I jest with all ;  
But in my solitary room above,  
I turn my face in silence to the wall :  
My heart is breaking for a little love.”

ON Christmas night the servants at Heather-ton always have a ball, at which the family and their guests assist for the first quarter of an hour or so. The large laundry is decorated with evergreens and tissue-paper roses for the occasion, and lighted with plenty of tallow candles in tin sconces.

The females wear town fashions rustically got up, the men, with infinitely better taste, are mostly in kilts.

It is the correct thing for the gentry present to select partners from among the tenantry and servants, so I figure off with the under-gardener, a tall strapping youth inclined to "cheekiness," when his normal *mauvaise honte* evaporates. He and I sport the light fantastic toe in a wild sort of national dance, where now and again the men snap their fingers above their heads, and yell like Sioux Indians at a scalping-match.

Probably my "cavalier" has been tasting his native mountain-dew, for the howls he gives forth are so much wild-beastlier than those of his *confrères*, that I lay my hand on his tartan-clad arm and say "Hush!" just as the figure of the dance requires us to stand still for a few minutes.

My back is towards a sort of recess,

partially hidden by a clothes screen, covered with holly and ivy, behind which Miss Etta, her mother, and Mrs. Murray are resting.

I cannot help overhearing them.

“Yes,” squeaks Miss Etta, “she is horrid, isn’t she? I wish we had never invited her! Her conduct is most disreputable, and perfectly disgusts Theodore. He says—only fancy!—that she actually implored him to leave the ice, and go on the moor with her; and, poor fellow! as she is our guest, he was at a loss how to act, but only went out of consideration for us. Oh, mamma, do look how she is carrying on with gardener Sandy, actually patting him on the arm! I hope Theodore sees her! It’s horrid! fancy touching a common working-man’s arm in that familiar way—dancing with them is different. I think as well-conducted ladies, we should give her the cold shoulder at once, without being rude, of course, for Mrs. Frazer’s sake, but so as to cut

her to the quick. And setting up for a beauty too! Theodore says he can't see a bit of good looks in her; but, to be sure, he has a horror of women with dark eyes, and thinks hers twice as big and black as any respectable female's ought to be."

"Well, well, Etta, she is here, and it is too late to help it, we must just be patient for a day or two. Mr. Frazer and his friend will be here on Tuesday, and *that* I should think will put a stop to her flirtation!"

"Mamma, are you raving? the idea of Theodore flirting with a creature like that!"

"No, no, my dear!—I meant—that is, I—"

"Hush, she'll hear you," says Mrs. Murray, in an audible whisper; "but—Well! I do declare, if she isn't trying to attract *my* lord and master! not the slightest use, but no thanks to her. By-the-bye, is it that nice-looking

clerical young Frazer, she is to be married to, or his friend the advocate? I used, when you were in town, to fancy your Annie and he, would make a match of it. Perhaps that's why he is coming! Annie is cut out for a parson's wife. Do you know it strikes me that Miss Gathorne's eyes are touched up with Belladonna—that is what gives her such an improper look. . . and she is painted—there's no mistake about that. . . I wonder you asked her here, I shouldn't if I had daughters!"

I gnash my teeth metaphorically.

Mr. Egerton and the cook *pousette* to opposite where I stand. He is contemptible, but will serve well enough as a rod to scourge Etta with, so I "make eyes" at him, which, unaware of her proximity, he responds to, by shrugging his shoulders with a slight but knowing smile.

Presently he and I amble off again with

our respective partners, and, after sundry evolutions, find ourselves shoulder to shoulder when the dance concludes.

The *petit quart d'heure* sacred to saltatory equality and fraternity is over.

Mr. Morrison lets go the lady's-maid's waist, and, bowing all round like a stage-king in a barn, says, "I hope you will enjoy yourselves, and so does my wife. Be as happy as you can, Christmas comes but once a year!"

The address is acknowledged by three cheers, with all the honours, and then, emerging from her leafy bower, Mrs. Morrison, with a patronizing smirk, leads the way upstairs, the lads and lasses we leave behind, glad to be rid of us, judging from their roars of laughter when our backs are fairly turned.

My blood is still boiling at Etta's and her mother's remarks. Misery, nothing but



misery, whichever way I turn : I feel like a salamander stinging its own tail.

Just for a fleeting instant, I wish passionately that what theologians term "a renewal of the will" would take place in mine, and that some quiet, wealthy, elderly man would offer me his hand, and give me a chance to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

As the idea strikes me, I glance at MacStruan of MacStruan, to see how I could stand the realization of it.

Ugh !

All this skits through my head while we are mounting from the servants' quarters to the upper regions.

The way lies through first one long stone passage, and then another, and, whether accidentally or not, I find myself unescorted, while the others pace merrily along, in twos and threes.

Is this polite avoidance of me the first fruits of female spite ?

To-night when all these people are sleeping soundly, I shall be weeping, weeping, weeping alone in the dark, but meantime "Nemo me impune lacessit," and Miss Etta has got to be "served out" for her back-biting.

As to her betrothed, he is just the shilly-shallying sort of man, who, without actual vice, gets mixed up in domestic tragedies, for want of moral back-bone. I have not much myself, but am sharp enough to see how the absence of it sets people on the downward slide.

If I *am* the unhappiest girl in Scotland, why is it but just because Horace has no fixity of principle ?

And how I used to glory in him, as truer and nobler than his fellows ! Last night when he said to his wife, "Come away with me,"

---

I ate the bitter fruit of the Tree of knowledge.

For all his degradation I love him yet, but my eyes are opened, and I see.

The servants are still footing it merrily in the laundry. In the drawing-room some are at cards, two at chess, and Bella and Annie Morrison extorting a duet from the victimized piano.

Mrs. Morrison is entreating Etta to go to bed, as her cold seems worse, but she snappishly refuses to budge from the low chair, where she sits by the fire, in a pale blue Shetland shawl and head-gear, using at the rate of a pocket-handkerchief every three minutes..

I remain apart, and nobody has the civility to ask me why. Evidently I am sent to Coventry, which takes the pluck out of me, cools my rage, and swells my heart.

If I put off much longer, I shall not have

courage to do what I intend, so with an inward tremble I begin operations.

Mr. Egerton is sitting near the door, splitting his sides at some joke of old MacStruan's, and the room being large, it will not do to march straight across, and say, "Come out for a smoke."

Instead of that, I take a chair beside Miss Etta, sympathize sweetly about her cold, and gradually draw her into what *looks* like a friendly chat.

Instinct tells me I am that moment at my loveliest, a very decided contrast to the dowdy young woman who is to be Mr. Egerton's wife. The more he gazes across at us, the sweeter do I smile to my sniffling neighbour, who would strike me if she dared.

"How charmingly your sister plays!" I remark. "Did not I hear some one say we were going to have a waltz? Being in such deep mourning, I do not dance, but shall

gladly officiate at the piano. There are so few quite young ladies, that neither Miss Bella nor Miss Annie can be spared. My playing is not much to boast of, but I shall do the best I can. See, here comes Mr. Egerton to claim you as his partner."

But ere he can reach us I am rattling off the Telegraph Waltz, for behoof of five or six couples, who spin round as if the music made them dizzy.

As the instrument is placed my face is to the wall, and after a while I begin to find the situation dreary.

I give a little squint over my shoulder, and behold a nibble at my bait, Mr. Egerton bringing his "future" to exchange places with me, in order that I may take a single round with him, "for, of course," he says, "it is all bosh about not dancing because one has on a black gown, isn't it, Etta?"

She reminds me of a snared rabbit as

she takes the music-stool; by the glare of her watery eyes I think she sees the "trap."

I suffer myself to be *persuaded* to a single waltz, and in the elation of my heart can hardly help exclaiming, "Friend Theodore, you are not quite such a fool as you look."

Like her countenance, Etta's music wants accentuation, and doesn't she sneeze! but we get on capitally.

Mr. Egerton dances well, and informs me he never, at home or abroad, met with such a perfect partner. We keep up a sort of jerky conversation while spinning round.

After a while Etta, who has been playing the Olga waltz, exchanges it for "Come into the garden, Maude," outraged into a *deux temps*.

"Do you know the original song?" asks my partner, hopping in "time," so that the

sentence divides itself into a "three-in-the-bar" rhythm.

"Yes! pretty idea isn't it?—who could—refuse such—an invite—in flowery summer weather."

"I don't see—that the—weather makes—any odds. June or—December is—all one to—kindred souls."

"Ah! yes but—what are kindred souls?"

"I am not—good at—description, *you* tell me."

I favour him with a succinct definition, after which we perform awhile in silence, he clasping my waist rather firmer, I posing so that the top of my right cheek rests against his manly breast.

After three or four minutes of this sort of thing, I remark,—

"Shall I tell you—what I mean to do—after the next round?"

"Yes?"

“Go outside and—have a look—at the mountains—by starlight.”

“All right—the door is open—shall we make—our exit now—like Harlequin—and Columbine?”

Which we do.

“Here, have this,” he says in the hall, catching down a MacStruan tartan plaid from the rack, and wrapping it carefully round me, sorry, no doubt, we are not nearer the lamp, which is garnished with misletoe.

Although we only walk a few yards from the house, it feels worlds away. There is no moon, but under the shimmering half-light of the stars, how solemnly the grand old hills lift their snowy crests.

A momentary spell falls over me, a faint shadow of what I used to feel when Horace sang “Holy! Holy! Holy!”

The adoring love that filled my heart is turned to bitterness, but as I stand gazing



up, I would fain flee away to some region  
where one might

. . . . . niedersinken  
Unter dem Palmenbaum,  
Und Lieb und Ruhe trinken,  
Und träumen seligen Traum!"

"Should you mind if I take a cigar?" asks  
Mr. Egerton.

"Not in the least, if you will let me have  
one to keep you company."

"Are you serious?"

"Quite: are you shocked?"

"Never at anything you do."

He has only one fusee, and lights both my  
Havanna and his own.

Mine refuses to draw, so there's nothing  
for it but rekindling at his, which brings our  
noses pretty close together.

To this tableau arrives Miss Bella's fiancé,  
to say Mrs. Morrison is wondering what has  
become of us, and has sent him to find out.

"Dear Lady Skewton, how attentive of her!" I say, glancing saucily at my companion.

He seems inclined to bid his future brother mind his own business, I, more discreetly, suggest he should join us in a whiff, which he does so gladly, that I infer he is tired of playing "good boy," and thankful to refresh himself with a harmless *lark*, like a whale coming to the surface for air.

The night, however exquisite, is rather cold for a *standing* conversation, so we saunter up and down, the fumes of our cigars curling gracefully, little trills of laughter interluding our talk.

The sound of the three fiddles, still hard at work in the laundry, comes in muffled snatches, like the humming of bees, Captain Murray's harsh bass voice is heard singing a *notturmo* in the drawing-room, accompanied by his wife on the guitar, I and my two

cavaliers move to and fro in the crisp air, arranging to get up a tableau to-morrow evening.

“You would make a splendid Ruth,” suggests Mr. Egerton. “Crimson and orange oriental dress.”

“No,” says the other, “I have it! Miss Gathorne would be divine as the ‘Beautiful Circassian,’ in the ‘Light of the Harem,’ and you are a three-tailed Bashaw to the life, nothing could be better—oh! allow me.”

It is my plaid he fancies is slipping off, and now politely re-fastens.

As my other companion has done the same thing thrice, within five minutes, I imagine the insecurity of my wrap is a mere excuse for fingering it. If it gives them any pleasure, I’m sure they are very welcome to so harmless a pastime. I envy them for finding anything amusing in this dreary world.

Whilst we smoke and chat, our little party

becomes gradually enlarged, till nearly all the gentlemen are present. Primed, no doubt, by the ladies, they came to sneer, but remain to enjoy the fun such as it is.

My heart is, I am very sure, the heaviest of the lot, yet none the less am I the brilliant centre of attraction, on which MacStruan, Murray, and Co. dance attendance in the starry frost.

Fashion is a wonderful mystery, and for the moment I am the "rage."

Why?

Did anybody ever see the wind rise?

Twenty minutes since, those men were shaking their heads, and taking sides with the women against me. Now, I overhear that "By Jove, I am charming, fascinating, the pluckiest little thing out," worth a house-full of your "yea-nay," neutral-tinted pinks-of-propriety.

By way of fleeing from myself, I chaff one,

trip up another, and jump wits with a third, till the MacStruan, and one or two such ancients, look as if, like Faust, they would gladly sell their souls to the Devil, to be as young and pretty, and joyous, and lovely, and beloved.

With the gay smile on my rosy lips, my heart is breaking.

When shortly after going in-doors we retire to rest, the way my own sex wish me "Good-night" is freezing, and I observe the two brides scowling at their future owners, evidently preparing for battle when the coast is clear.

I know exactly how it will be. Mr. Egerton, who is three quarters in love with me and of the earth earthy, will turn Queen's Evidence, but poor little Bruce, though he looks like a tailor's apprentice on Sunday, has more spirit, and will stand up for me like a brick.

Well, well! Let them take their fill of backbiting!

Ah! mon Dieu, how frivolous these petty squabbles are!

Surrounded with company, it was all I could do to keep thought at bay; here, in the quiet of my own room, the sham hilarity strips off my soul, and I stand face to face with the painful fact that in three days Horace will be here.

To weep might relieve the weight at my heart, but tears come not, I feel as if I had already wept them dry. My forehead is burning, probably because I have caught cold staying so long bareheaded in the frost.

I look at my watch, and am sorry to see it is only half-past eleven! Would it were morning! though when day-light comes I shall assuredly cry, Would it were evening!

The room is comfortable, but nothing in the reading line, except a Bible and somebody or other's "Daily Bread" on the dressing table.

Dear Mrs. Frazer begged me to let her know of my arrival here, and I promised, but alas! it was between the time Horace went out with Mr. Beatoun, and came back to find his wife waiting. Only last night! woe is me; to think it was only last night!

I shall never see the darling old lady again. It never struck me before that she is literally "old Mrs. Frazer" now, and that that odious woman with the fusty shawl is "Mrs. Horace." It is enough to drive me mad! but the son's disgrace must not make me appear ungrateful to his mother. So I lift a tiny table to the fire-side, open my travelling desk, and, feeling as if making my "Will," I write what is certainly a clever letter, if it answers its purpose of throw-

ing everybody off the scent, when I slink away to Baden next week.

At 12.30, my epistle being directed and Queen's-headed, I undress and go to bed, tired, yet not even drowsy.

The candles are out, but there is an excellent fire, which makes the room light and snug. I resolutely shut my eyes, and court sleep by counting three hundred, in a low voice.

A dog outside, sets up a long-drawn, whining howl.

Perhaps it is baying at the moon? No, by-the-bye, there is none to night. They say dogs howl before a death. Is mine at hand?

“Yowl—yowl—yowl-l-l-l.”

I wish to goodness the beast would give over! For the last twenty-four hours I have, off and on, been intending to make away with myself, but this “warning” brings *Doom*, rather crudely to the front.

Somebody says that if soldiers were uni-



formed in butchers' blue blouses and aprons, it would show so plainly what war *is*, that spears would be speedily beaten into pruning-hooks.

Even so does that hound's yelp make me shrink in terror from the suicide I had half made up my mind to.

"Yowl-l—yowl-l-l—yowl-l-l."

A cinder drops from the grate!

I open my eyes!

At the fire, facing the bed, in her long frilled night-gown and close cap, stands Mrs. Frazer gazing mournfully at me!

Bathed in cold sweat I squeeze my eyes tight, pull the clothes up over my head, and would whisper the Lord's Prayer, if I were not too appalled to remember a word of it.

Every nerve in my body is throbbing in a hideous sort of Runic rhyme, to the ticking of my watch under the pillow, and a horrible idea seizes me that it? she? which is it? has moved close to the front of the bed.

Some piece of furniture—probably the wardrobe, which is quite new—gives a sharp crack, and climaxes my agony.

Clenching my teeth and hands, I wail forth a series of quavery prolonged groans, expecting the bed-clothes to be hauled off my face, and that I shall presently go raving mad, and be in a strait-jacket when Horace arrives.

“Yowl—yowl-l—yowl-l-l.”

I wonder if the fire is burning blue? Flames always do in the presence of ghosts. When she pulls the clothes off, will the look of her eye congeal the marrow in my bones? Will she freeze my blood with the “touch of her finger?”

A hurried rap at the door, and in rushes Mrs. Murray, crying, “Whatever is the matter? Are you ill?”

The sound of her voice is like life from the dead, but sets me off in hysterical shrieks.

Their room being next door, the Captain presently arrives in his dressing-gown, to see, as he phrases it, "what the devil's up?" and ere long my extempore *reception* is also patronized by Messrs. Morrison, Egerton, Bruce, and old MacStruan, who having wriggled, in the dark, into the first garments they could clutch hold of, look as if they had mistaken my chamber, for the top of the Righi, and come to see the sun rise.

Everybody begins gabbling at the same time, What is it? how was it? who is it? is she hurt? was it robbers? where is the fire?

By this time my nerves are quieted, and I cannot help smiling to myself under the bed-clothes, which, after a peep at the party, I hold so tight, that whether or not I am wounded, remains a problem.

"Was it a dream?" inquires Mrs. Morrison, with her ear close above where my mouth is supposed to be?

"Yes."

"A very awful dream."

"Yes."

"Ay! just as I thought, night-mare. I'm afraid, poor girl! she is very nervous."

"It's more likely all affectation," snaps Miss Etta, who has just entered swathed like a mummy, and is possibly more astonished than pleased at meeting her "Theodore" then and there. "It is nothing but affectation, on purpose to have a fuss made about her."

Says Mrs. Morrison, "Go back to your beds all of you, I shall remain till she is safe to be left. It is a mercy nothing happened! I thought the house was on fire."

"Good night, good night," and exit everybody except the house-mistress, to whom I now disclose my flushed visage.

I am convinced that what I saw was no dream, and am in mortal terror, lest poor

Mrs. Frazer may re-appear the instant I am alone, but not for anything would I tell this to Mrs. Morrison.

“It was the mince-pie you had at dinner,” says she, “that gave you indigestion, which caused nightmare. I think a dose of rhubarb will be the best thing for you, but perhaps it may be as well to take it in the morning, and have some warm brandy toddy now, to make you sleep.”

I second the motion, and am presently served with a comforting glass of smoking punch.

“Should you like one of the maids to sit up with you?” she asks, anxious to get back to her own bed, yet not quite convinced of the truth of her nightmare theory. “In case of another attack, my dear, should you like one of the servants beside you?”

I am mortally ashamed to say, *yes*, but would not be left by myself for untold gold.

So the young-ladies' maid, who is worn out with dancing and has just gone to bed, is ordered to sit in my room, and under her guardianship I fall asleep.

## CHAPTER XV.

### ALAS ! FOR CHARITY.

“Though the many lights dwindle to one light,  
There is help if the Heavens have one.”

THANKS to the strength of the brandy punch, my slumbers last unbroken till ten o'clock, when breakfast is sent up with quite a little pile of cards on the tray.

“What are these?” I inquire.

“Please, miss, the gentlemen sends them with their kind regards, and hopes you feels yourself pretty well this morning, ma'am. It was Mr. Bruce, ma'am that laid down his card first, and bade me ask most particular how you was.”

Conveying my thanks and the information that I am quite well, the maid retires.

It is snowing heavily, so there's no hope of hard exercise in the open air, which I crave for as I never did before.

Mewed up in-doors, I feel as if I should go mad. The seven passions seem to have set to work simultaneously upon my tortured heart, pricking it, scorching it, tearing it, melting it, puffing it out, freezing it, crinkling it up, in the most contradictory way conceivable.

I never before felt the full force of the phrase, "You don't know what you would be at."

My cogitations are not soothing. *Ex. gr.* It is shameful of neither my hostess nor her daughters coming to ask how I am ! I wish, however, the men had not been so polite, in the circumstances, although it certainly *was* plucky of little Bruce, to be the first to stick up for such a black sheep. How detestable of Mrs. Murray



to say behind my back, that I rouge and paint my eye-brows—though she does it fast enough herself. How odious everything and everybody is! Poor Mrs. Frazer's ghost has made me afraid to make away with myself, so there's no use going to Baden, and I am all at sea again. Edinburgh I shall never enter more!—could not stand the sight of Horace and his wife!—I know of a boarding house in Paris, and have half a mind to try it. Could I write a novel, I wonder? it might keep me from eating my own heart. All about purple velvet gowns, and sable-tail trimmings, and unlimited "Vin de Grave," and pink satin-high-heeled boots, and winter-peaches at half a guinea each, and a general snuffing-out of the ten commandments. It would keep me delightfully occupied; but whatever the Morrisons and their coterie may think, I fear I am not sufficiently versed in the annals

---

of Phrynedom, to compose a spicy story for church-going people's daughters to lick their lips over, at 3*d.* per vol. per night.

Thus my thoughts heap themselves confusedly, but, by the time I have finished my meal, two fresh ideas stand out from the main body, and put me quite at my wits' end.

To be cold-shouldered by those contemptible women down-stairs, makes me, for the first time in my life, feel so disreputable, that the thought of it turns me sick. I have often and often gone in for larkier feats than smoking a quiet cigar, without losing a certain sense of self-respect; but this two-penny halfpenny social "taboo," makes me feel like Jane Shore, walking weak and weary up and down great London town, with her former intimates hissing *à qui mieux, mieux* as she passed by. Have I sinned? No! but the inward goodness of me is not

sturdy enough to uphold my spirit against petty spite and scorn.

The second new consideration which brings me 'up short, is the want of money to elope with, to Paris or anywhere else.

I wonder it never struck me before, that, being under age, all my cash has to be paid through my guardian, and the 200*l*. I gave for his ring leaves me exactly 8*l*. 3*s*. 9*d*. in hand. Altogether it is a terrible fix.

The air is dark with falling snow.

My head aches hotly.

I do not seem as if I could muster courage to face the world again, or even be at the trouble to provoke Etta and Bella, by making their swains flirt. The "go" is utterly cowed out of me, and I feel like a skinned hare, though I have done no wrong. I could beat myself for being so down in the mouth, but ah ! if anybody but knew how young and forlorn I feel.

"Well," my dear, says Mrs. Morrison, bustling in, "I am glad to see you looking better. Shall you be able to be down at lunch? There's no possibility of going out to-day; so we ladies are in the boudoir with our work, if you care to join us. By-the-bye, did you take your rhubarb?"

"No."

"Don't risk mince-pie again, if you are liable to these alarming seizures, or indeed eat any thing heavy, however much you may like it. I declare I never was so frightened in my life. I thought you had set the bed on fire. Shall I order a light pudding for your dinner? There is to be a *plum* one, but for mercy's sake do not touch it; will you have sago, or rice?"

I burst into tears the instant she shuts the door. The vicious old thing! to set me down as a glutton, and no doubt tell all the gentlemen so.

Virtue is strength, they say. Possibly. *I* might have turned out like a girl in a penny-tract in course of time, if Horace had behaved as he ought. Nay, I was already stepping heavenwards, but now the chances are I shall slope double-quick time in the opposite direction. *Still*, I love him, more shame to me ! Every shred of respect is torn into fiddle-strings, and I shall shun him as if he were a mad dog, till my latest breath—but—I adore him !

“ The heart that once truly loves never forgets,  
But as truly loves on to its close ;  
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets  
The same look that she gave when he rose.”

Heigho ! *my* god has set with a vengeance, but it will not do to lie abed all day, so I get up and begin dressing.

When that operation is in such a state of forwardness, that my hair is all about my

shoulders, Mrs. Murray arrives with her inevitable crochet-work.

“Do I incommode you?” says she, flopping into a low chair beside the fire.

“Not in the least.”

The fact is, her hair is so coarse and thin I am glad to provoke her by exhibiting the length, gloss, and thickness of my own.

While I twist, and plait, and twine it, we talk backwards and forwards, but in spite of her light chit-chat, I fancy there is some impertinence in reserve, which, as she grossly toadies the Morrisons, is probably instigated by them.

Presently out it comes, apropos of the “Tableaux” for this evening.

“By-the-bye, Mr. Egerton mentioned at breakfast that, without consulting the lady of the house or anybody, you and he had arranged to do the ‘Light of the Harem’ between you. Now, my dear Miss Gathorne,

you must excuse me for giving you a *wee* bit of advice, which is, not to *pose* with either of the intended sons-in-law. No one imagines you intend any actual wrong by the way you carry on with men, but it is not *comme il faut*, and the Morrisons are extremely fastidious about propriety, in fact there has been a row about you this morning already, which I need not say, is most painful in present circumstances. It was Mrs. Morrison herself who begged me to give you a hint, and I am sure you will see the necessity of behaving with more—with less—more modesty, and not making up to gentlemen, as unfortunately you seem to have a knack of doing. You are not annoyed, are you ?”

“There was a row about me ?” I cry, with blazing eyes, while my heart gives a short, sharp leap, like a twinge of neuralgia.  
“There was a row about *me* ?”

“Well ! yes,—but pray don’t fly into a



rage. It was all that stupid Bruce's fault, standing up so imprudently for you, and sending his card, although—"

"Standing up for me? Why did he need to? Who was maligning me? What was said? I insist upon knowing, or I shall put the question personally to each individual who was present."

"Tcha! tcha! pistols for two and coffee for one, I suppose! Now please don't make mountains of mole-hills."

"What was said about me, which Mr. Bruce took my part for, *so imprudently*? Don't quibble."

"Really you are the most violent person I ever came across. I'm sure I wish I had not interfered, only Mrs. Morrison could not possibly permit such goings on, and begged me to speak to you as a friend."

"What was said about me? Who said it? Tell it straight out, every syllable, or, as sure



as I stand here, I shall go to Mr. Egerton, repeat every word you have spoken, and quit the house instantly, although I have to walk on foot through the storm."

"Well ! well ! Compose yourself, and I shall tell you all that took place, trusting to your honour not to repeat it. They were speaking at breakfast about the fit you had last night, and what could be the cause of it ? Etta thoughtlessly suggested *drink*, but her mamma said 'No,' and that probably you were . . . . really I cannot go on if you stare, and stretch your nostrils so wildly."

"I was probably what ?"

"Liable to fits of insanity—Of course it was only *talk* ; neither she nor Etta meant what they said."

"Then what ? word for word, remember, or I go to Mr. Egerton !"

"Some said one thing and some another, and

Bella foolishly blurted out that even the Frazers had only your own word for your antecedents. Of course you are your father's daughter, but she said—I really do not like to repeat things—”

“She said I was my father's daughter, but—”

“But it seemed very strange for a young lady to be living quite alone in a foreign hotel, and then travelling up and down the continent with a young man, and not even a maid to play propriety, besides smoking cigars, and—really I forget the rest. Just then Nancy brought in the tray for your breakfast; and Mr. Bruce, with a face as red as fire, laid his card on it, and sent his most respectful compliments. At that, old MacStruan clapped his hands, cried ‘Bravo!’ bade a servant bring his card-case, and laid his ‘pasteboard’ beside Mr. ——. Murder! murder! My face is cut to pieces.”

The truth is, being quite beside myself with rage, I have, in what Italians call "a moment of vivacity," let fly the china brush-tray at her cheek, which is bleeding a little.

Not being of the "*turn the other cheek*" persuasion, but rather in the "*up and at them*" style of Wellington's pet guards at Waterloo, Mrs. Murray, before I can utter the word "regret," has half of my dressing-gown collar in her hand, and is ringing the bell frantically.

When Mrs. Morrison and her amiable progeny arrive there's sure to be a free fight, so I lock the door, put the key in my petticoat-pocket, and, forcing my "*wounded*" back to her seat, implore her to hold her tongue, and be assured I am distressed at the accident.

And so I am. Now that my indignation has so far worked off, I wonder why I shied

the crockery at her head, and can take my oath it was not done *malice prepense*.

The skirmish has come off so rapidly, that the Morrisons have not yet entered appearance, so, till they do, I utilize the interval, in making things pleasant.

“Come, my dear Mrs. Murray,” I say cheerfully, sponging her cut, “don’t be a baby; it’s a mere scratch, which will not show after a day or two. Just pretend you hit your face against something, which is so far true, you know. There! the bleeding has stopped. Now, if you bring me into the matter, I shall just, as I said, throw myself upon the gentlemen’s protection, till my cousin and Mr. Beatoun arrive. It will never be noticed if you dab some Ninon powder over it, and, at any rate, can’t be helped! Come, let us kiss and be friends, I hate quarrelling, and forgive you with all my heart, I’m sure.”

“Are you ill again?” cries Mrs. Morrison, rattling the door-handle.

“She’s a horrid beast, mamma!” remarks Miss Etta, *sotto voce*.

“Is it another fit you have taken?” interrogates her mother, shaking the door, like a winter blast. “Why are you locked in?”

“Have it forced open, mamma,” puts in Miss Bella, “you’ll see if I am not right, after all. She is tipsy, that’s what it is.”

Wagging a warning forefinger to admonish Mrs. Murray she had best, for her own sake, be prudent, I slip on a fresh pink dressing-jacket, and, opening the door a chink, coolly ask what is wanted.

“You—you rang so violently,” stammers my hostess; “we feared you had another attack.”

“Rang? not I. Are you in the habit of fancying you hear bells? If so, you should

lose no time in seeing a physician. It shows an apoplectic tendency. My dear papa used to say so."

After a while I dismiss my prisoner, and sit down, dazed and head-achy, to wonder what the next scene of my life-tragedy will be! I shall not go to lunch, so they may arrange the tableau as they best can, without my help. If it prove a fiasco, so much the better.

All the forenoon I lie in bed on my back, falling from time to time into short snoozes, which are "recuperative" after the fatigue of so much worry.

The parish minister, who is reported in love with Annie Morrison's 10,000*l.*, is coming to dinner; the 10,000*l.*, which poor Pat Beatoun requires so much, that I have quite a spite at his rival.

In view of yesterday's doings, I suppose I am expected to appear with my head

bowed down like a bulrush, and dressed as if *en penitence* ; but I don't believe in such signs and symbols.

My maxim is, "Always do yourself justice," and on the present occasion I should not be doing so, unless I utilized the resources of beauty, as I once heard an uxorious Yankee describe the "get-up" of his wife, who was an ingenious compound of pads, false hair, rouge, and dentistry.

I pass two mortal hours at my toilet, but the result is satisfactory.

My dress is crape over satin, the high-body transparent, with floating, angel-wing sleeves, and my hair, simply braided, is bound round with the merest thread of diamonds, nothing else, not even earrings.

To me there is something intensely sweet in the odour of Ess Bouquet, so I do not spare it, and carrying the feathery spangled fan which dear Mrs. Frazer gave me—ah!

mon Dieu—only three days ago,—I descend to face *my* public, with, I imagine, much the same sort of sensation that beautiful fiendish Countess de Brinvilliers must have had, when she curled her hair and put on scarlet robes, on purpose to make every man who saw her on her way to the guillotine lose his heart. For ten minutes the tumbril became Love's triumphal car, and then, as she expected, the Countess's exquisite head was chopped off.

My entrance I intend shall be a "sensation," taking the men by storm, and turning the women green with envy; but Fate is against me.

The gong has this instant done sounding, but it is one of old Morrison's barbarisms "never to wait meals," as he says, "for King or Kaiser," so all the couples have been told off, and are already on the move.




Furious at not being made more account of, I walk haughtily to a high-backed chair near the fire, and seat myself in the attitude of Queen Elizabeth receiving a city deputation.

The gentlemen brighten up and smile, but being mostly charged with a couple of females apiece, cannot do more, though they make a simultaneous halt.

“Oh ! my dear, I am so delighted you are able to join us after all !” cries the hostess, pretending to be surprised. “Mr. Angus Macdonald will kindly give you his arm.”

The odious manœuvring old grimalkin ! to put me off with a whiskerless chick of seventeen, just because she knows he is such a gawky, he is sure to keep near the foot of the table. I am afraid I do not look angelic as I accept his escort, but it is very amusing to observe Mr. Bruce and Bella linger at the dining-room door till we come up, when the



latter entreats us to find seats in their immediate vicinity.

So much for the training of her future proprietor, although, poor woman, to do her justice, if glances could kill, hers would me.

Where there's a will there's a way. At table Mr. Bruce and I find ourselves shoulder to shoulder, flanked by Bella on the right, and my juvenile beau on the left.

Mr. Egerton and Etta are straight opposite, but although he hardly takes his eyes off my face, he dares no more act like Bruce than ride on a torpedo.

There are men and men, and the handsomest are not always those you admire most.

Mrs. Murray looks as sour as vinegar, when I happen to catch her eye through the flowers in the epergne, although by candle-light her cheek doesn't look much amiss considering.

Dinner goes off charmingly. I am successful beyond my expectations, but now and again the Countess de Brinvilliers, riding in scarlet to her doom, comes into my head, I can't think why, and makes me shiver.

In less than a quarter of an hour *my* triumph will be over for the present, and the women are sure to make me eat humble-pie, when the men are not there to see.

I feel as if a dark cold cloud were enfolding me, when the hostess *beams* the usual notice for ladies to withdraw.

At that moment a servant comes behind my chair, and handing me a card, says, "the gentleman wishes to see me immediately, and waits in the library."

"Mr. Patrick Beatoun" is on the card.

Sick and faint, I sink back on the seat I have just risen from.

All sorts of horrors fly through my brain.

Mrs. Frazer's ghost *was* a warning after all, perhaps Horace is dead !

Messrs. Egerton and Bruce put wine to my lips and fan me, then, more dead than alive, I go to the library.

A mist is before my eyes, through which I dimly descry Patrick Beatoun.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER XVI.

## PAIRED, NOT MATCHED.

“ I shall not die, but live forlore,  
How bitter it is to part;  
O! to meet thee, my love, once more;  
O! my heart! my heart!  
No more to hear, no more to see;  
O! that an echo might wake,  
And waft one note of thy psalm to me  
Ere my heart-strings break.”

“ No, I do not think I felt ill before. All I can recollect is that when I opened the door, Mr. Beatoun seemed to be waving to and fro in a mist, and a terrific pain shot through my heart. I fainted then I suppose; the agony was so fearful, I could not have lived if it had lasted more than

---

a few seconds, but don't speak of it, please, I would forget it, if possible."

I am on the library sofa, being interviewed by Mrs. Morrison, whose conscience, if she has such a thing, must be rather a nuisance just at present, I should imagine.

It appears that on opening the door, I swayed an instant from side to side, then tottered forward to shake hands with Mr. Beatoun, who was barely in time, by catching me in his arms, to save me from falling insensible on the floor.

I feel so weak and weary, and cold and friendless, that with a hysterical sob I shut my eyes, sorry they ever opened after being apparently closed in death, for it seems my faint lasted so long, it was thought all was over, and that Roberta Gathorne, admired of men, and eschewed of women, slept the sleep that knows no waking.

A physician many miles off has been sent

for, as the local one is from home, but meanwhile the Faculty is represented by the minister, who attended some medical classes before going in for the Church, and occasionally prescribes for his parish poor.

At his instigation I swallow some hot whisky toddy; the fire is poked into a roaring blaze, the sofa wheeled near it, my head raised with pillows, and the room cleared.

As with his finger and thumb on my wrist, he issues this last command, I look to see who is ordered away, and observe Mr. Egerton with his elbows on the mantelpiece, and his face hidden in his hands.

At the foot of the sofa stands Mr. Bruce, looking at me with a manly expression of sympathy, which for the moment makes him quite handsome, and at his side Bella is weeping quietly. Tears are salt and water, but there are tears and tears, and she had

perhaps better not analyze hers too minutely, if she proposes enjoying her prayers to-night.

These three, with Mrs. Morrison, form the foreground of the picture. Fifteen or twenty persons are crowded near the door, staring with all their might.

"Please retire," reiterates the minister, "she'll do now, I think."

I have clean forgotten Pat's existence, but while the others are going, I partly turn round, and there he is, half-leaning over the back of the sofa, looking much gentler and less self-contained than usual.

My first sensation is one of intense thankfulness that here is somebody bound up, so to speak, in the bundle with me and mine. My wounded self-respect revives. Neither Mrs. Murray nor anybody else will dare now to hint that my behaviour is incorrect.

My hostess, having jumped, I suppose, to the conclusion that the advocate's engage-



ment to me is fact, not mere hearsay, we are left alone.

Coming round to the front of the sofa, and taking my hand, "You are better now, aren't you?" he says, quite tenderly, for him.

Without moving off my back, I smile, "yes," up at him, and my eyelids droop, from sheer feebleness, not for effect.

I feel life too terribly realistic for shamming. All at once a cruelly strong magnifier seems held to my eyes, through which things look altered, and, ah me! are those ugly shrivelled, brown, bits of corruption, the splendid red roses, Horace was crowned withal?

"Do you feel strong enough to hear why I am here alone?" asks Mr. Beatoun. . . . "Bless me! such an idiot I am!" He flies to the bell.

"I shall not faint, but *do* tell me quickly!"

"Poor Mrs. Frazer died very suddenly last night, and Horace thought it better to

let you know the sad tidings through me, than to write."

"Mrs. Frazer died!"

I suppose I look very ill, for next moment he is on his knees, with one arm under my head, and holding my smelling salts at my nose.

I burst into a perfect storm of weeping, tears of thankfulness, God forgive me! such tears as might rain down the face of a shipwrecked wretch, flung on a barren rock to die of hunger.

"Was it very sudden?"

"Yes, instantaneous; when Horace came in just before dinner, she seemed a little nervous and agitated, but said there was not the slightest need to send for a doctor, and by evening appeared pretty much as usual. She was lying, after tea, on her sofa, and he writing at the table. When his letter was nearly finished, he said, without looking up, 'Please touch the bell, mother. I

wish this to go to the post directly.' Receiving no reply, he rose, but all was over. It is a great blow to him, poor fellow, at this time *especially!*"

"At this time *especially!*"

At those words—now that I know Horace is safe—my heart fills with indignation which, for the moment, comes near being hatred.

Is he so taken up with his wife that he could not even write me a line? Does he think me a stock or a stone, that instead of coming to comfort me for the grief he knows I must naturally suffer, he sends his lawyer? He is aware his mother's death makes it impossible for me to return to Manor Place, and will not even be at the trouble to inquire where I am to find a home? Darling Mrs. Frazer is happy in heaven, but I am so mortally afraid lest her ghost should appear again to-night, that I don't think I dare sleep alone, and Mrs. Morrison will never

have the sense to offer one of the maids to sit up again ! How dreadful it all is !

I sob, and sob, till I sob myself quiet. I dare not commit suicide, but I wish my breath would stop. Life is such weariness to look forward to, and I may have to drag through fifty years of it yet !

Only a girl still ! But—

One night destroy'd me like an avalanche.

One night turn'd all my summer back to snow.

My day *is* done ! My green leaves are withered. *Hic jacet*, the *real* Roberta Gathorne, aged eighteen years and six months.

From this mental tomb, however, I instantly resurrect, clutching a fixed idea, which is, that neither Mr. Beatoun nor anybody else shall ever know I discovered flaws and cracks in my idol.

Perhaps in my inmost soul I am ashamed of having worshipped so blindly, perhaps

what I experience is the revival of my former instinctive necessity for protecting one, whom I always used to feel infinitely better, yet weaker-willed than myself. At any rate, if I have peeped behind the Prophet's silver veil, none shall be wiser for what I saw, if I know the Grand Lama to be a gormandizing inanity, catch *me* warning the tribes of what they come up to adore!

Mr. Beatoun is still on his knees, with an arm under my pillow.

My mental gymnastics have not occupied five minutes, but from the way he glances at the bell, I fancy he thinks it time I should either sit up, or call in additional assistance.

Poor lost Horace used to tell him he cared more for "The Pandects" than pretty girls, and I believe it is true, but after all what does admiring pretty girls amount to! I am one—and my guardian was, or pretended to be, fond of *me*!

Sentiment is a mistake in this vile world ! It is lucky Mr. Beatoun is not over-burdened with it, or he could not give me the dispassionate advice I expect he will, about where to go, and what to do.

I wonder if he would feel insulted if I offered him a professional fee ? He is doomed to disappointment, I fear, if he has an eye to Miss Annie's 10,000*l.*, for she is evidently ready to jump down her parson's throat.

By-the-bye, how strange it was of said "Reverend" to say to Mrs. Morrison, as I was recovering from my faint, "Yes, in *their* circumstances she will naturally like to speak to him alone." Meaning me and Pat.

"Much better, thanks," I say, sitting up and liberating the advocate's arm. "It was so kind of you to take the trouble to come !"

"Don't mention it ! Horace was quite upset, and to write you would have been—"

“Yes, yes ; I perfectly understand, and am, believe me, very grateful. How long can you remain ?”

“I must leave on Monday for the funeral, which takes place on Tuesday, but if I can in any way be of assistance, pray command me.”

“I thankfully take you at your word. Our dear old friend’s death is such a shock, that I cannot speak of my own affairs to-night, but if you could kindly spare me half an hour to-morrow, while the others are at church, I shall be thankful.”

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]





